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He became Canada's most celebrated cartoonist, but fame could not erase his dark side. *by Brad Mackay*

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On the cover

A photo of a Great War Canadian soldier returning from the front lines in 1918. From the Canadian Expeditionary Force albums, Archives of Ontario.

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COMING UP IN CANADA'S HISTORY

Who Really Discovered the Northwest Passage?

It was long believed that members of the Franklin expedition "forged the last link with their lives." But this simply isn't true. Plus: The Magna Carta and Canadian law. And, early women car drivers.

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Canada's History magazine was founded by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1920 as *The Beaver: A Journal of Progress*. The HBC's commitment to the History Society and its programs continues today through the Hbc History Foundation. Canada's History Society was founded in 1994 to popularize Canadian history. The society's work includes: *Canada's History* magazine, *Kayak: Canada's History Magazine for Kids*, CanadasHistory.ca, and the Governor General's History Awards.



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VIMY

April 9, 1917

The day **CANADA** became a nation.

The Vimy Foundation's mission is to preserve and promote Canada's First World War legacy as symbolized by the victory at Vimy Ridge in April 1917. This momentous event is widely regarded as a defining moment in our history, where Canada first stepped forward onto the world stage.

Working with the Government of Canada, the Vimy Foundation is spearheading the building of an Education Centre at the Vimy Memorial site in France, so that students and visitors can better understand this pivotal moment in Canadian history.

The new Centre will open on the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, April 9, 2017.

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Lasting legacy

Hudson's Bay House in Winnipeg was abuzz with activity. After much planning, editor Douglas MacKay and the staff of *The Beaver* were about to unveil a major shift in focus and design for the magazine.

Thirteen years earlier, the Hudson's Bay Company had launched *The Beaver* as an internal newsletter, offering readers a folksy blend of company news and fur-trade tales from the traplines and trading posts of the North.

But with the September 1933 issue — Outfit 264, Number 2 — it became *The Beaver: A Magazine of the North*, with a mandate to share the stories of Canada's remote northern frontier.

The shift in focus was accompanied by a change in format. The new *Beaver* was printed on larger paper stock, while inside, greater attention was paid to design; articles featured bolder and more creative uses of photographs, illustrations, and maps.

The next major change occurred in 1986, when *The Beaver* dropped the tag line *A Magazine of the North* for *Exploring Canada's History*.

It was a dramatic shift — one that recognized that the elusive, enigmatic "frontier" was no more. Stories of northern exploration and adventure had passed from memory into history — but it was a history worth preserving and sharing.

This year, *Canada's History* — formerly

The Beaver magazine — will mark its ninety-fifth birthday. As Canada's second-oldest magazine, we're proud of our past, but also focused on the future.

For more than a year, the editorial team, led by art director James Gillespie, has worked on a new design that places *Canada's History* squarely in the spectrum of twenty-first-century publishing. It was a real team effort, with special thanks to design consultant Karen Simpson for her advice and encouragement.

Our new look features new fonts and font sizes that improve readability. Layouts are cleaner thanks to the creative use of white space.

And, while we have been called *Canada's History* magazine since 2010, we have not forgotten our historic connection to HBC and *The Beaver*. We've retained our Trading Post column that showcases fur trade-era artifacts; every feature article ends with a small beaver icon; and, in a direct nod to our past, we've renamed the Letters page "The Packet."

So please, explore the new *Canada's History* — we hope you like what you see. And we look forward to sharing Canada's stories for many years to come.

CONTRIBUTORS



J. Andrew Ross
("Born of Fire & Blood," page 20) is a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Guelph.

He is a member of the advisory board of the Guelph Civic Museum.

Q&A: Name one fascinating thing about "In Flanders Fields" poet John McCrae.

The intimacy of the era in which McCrae lived. He was friends with people like Sir Andrew Macphail, Maude Abbott, Sir William Osler, and Stephen Leacock, to name just a few.

Brad Mackay

("The Twisted Genius of George Feyer," page 34) is a writer whose work has appeared in various publications. In 2009 he wrote and co-edited *The Collected Doug Wright: Canada's Master Cartoonist*. He lives in Ottawa with his wife, three kids, and two cats.



Nelle Oosterom

("Lasting Liberation," page 44) is the senior editor of *Canada's History* magazine and has had a long career as a journalist. Her parents'

experiences in occupied Netherlands during the Second World War inspired her to write about the impact of Canada's role in the liberation of that country in 1945.

Todd Kristensen and Mike Donnelly

wrote "Water Ways" (page 28). Kristensen (top) is a regional archaeologist with Alberta's Archaeological Survey and a Ph.D. student at the University of Alberta. Donnelly is an Alberta archaeologist who has traced the western route of the fur trade by raft and canoe.



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Mystery man revealed

For years I have watched clips from the Second World War, looking for my father. Of course I never did see him, but imagine my surprise, while looking at your magazine, to see him sitting on the top of the train on page 26 ["Ties That Bind, Riding the Rails," December 2014-January 2015]. It stopped me short. I never did manage to get through the rest of the magazine.

My father's name was Frank Kane and he was born in 1908 in Washington, which would make him twenty-two in the photograph, taken in 1930. My grandparents came to Alberta in 1910. My father worked on the family farm when young, but otherwise I know very little of his early life. He died when I was thirteen. He joined the army when the war started.

I have two pictures of him. He was never a smiler and he always wore a hat, which seems to be at the same angle in all three pictures.

*Phyllis Kane
Strathmore, Alberta*



Smallpox hit close to home

Your smallpox story ["A Pox on our Nation," February-March 2015] was a great read.

It brought to mind the diary my grandmother kept of the daily happenings on a farm in Shanley, Ontario. Her entry of March 25, 1921, makes reference to my father: "Hartley home from Kemptville ... very sick." April 4: "Just discovered Hartley has smallpox after being home for ten days. Quarantined."

In the following days, five other children became ill. Neighbours supplied them with food, which they left at the end of the lane. Grandmother put out baking soda and water that family members were encouraged to take as often as possible. All the family survived without disfiguration. This was a terrifying story to me as a child.

Your magazine is a treasure. Continue the great work.

*Marilyn Wallace Chapman
Wainfleet, Ontario*

Long live King Eddy

Regarding the article on Calgary's King Edward Hotel [February-March 2015]: Many years ago an old farmer who seldom left his community went to a convention in Toronto by train. As he walked out of the station in Toronto, he was approached by a taxi driver picking up passengers for

delivery to a specified hotel. When the cabbie said, "King Edward, sir?" the old farmer replied, "Nope! Just plain Tom Cox from Eramosa."

*"Just Plain" Walter Black
Leaf Rapids, Manitoba*

Let sleeping soldiers lie

I was delighted to see in the photo on page 23 ["Ties That Bind," December 2014-January 2015] one of the many rail coaches filled with sleeping soldiers en route from Ontario to Saskatchewan to quell the uprising of 1885. My great grandfather, John Niblock, then CPR superintendent for the Superior region, was responsible for having those sleeping cars ready for General Frederick Middleton's weary militia.

The telegrams sent between the two in making the sleeper arrangements are housed in the Glenbow Museum Archives in Calgary and make for riveting reading. There were still miles of unfinished track to be laid in northern Ontario. The soldiers had to cross the ice of Lake Superior on foot until they reached, at Red Rock, the eastern terminus of rail that would see them on to Saskatchewan. No doubt they were overjoyed to get off their feet, get some grub, and go to sleep

*Frank Russell
Lethbridge, Alberta*

Understanding the Great War

I want to extend sincere thanks to Canada's National History Society and all the people involved in the production of *Canada's Great War Album*. My father was a Military Medal recipient at Vimy Ridge. I never felt that I understood what he and others experienced. The *Album*, with its well-written text and broad selection of photographs, has given me that understanding.

*Alistair Hensler
Ottawa*

Explorers rule

So nice to read something different in *Canada's History* ["Captain Cook's Canada," February-March 2015] — I must admit I was getting a bit tired of reading about wars.

*Birthe W. Achtner
Nelson, British Columbia*

Erratum

The article "Path of Most Resistance" (*Destinations*, February-March 2015) referred to Louis Riel being captured in 1885, implying that Riel was forcibly arrested. In fact Riel surrendered peacefully.

Email comments to editors@CanadasHistory.ca or write to *Canada's History*, Bryce Hall Main Floor, 515 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R3B 2E9 Canada. Include your address and phone number. Letters may be edited for clarity or length.



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A 3-D rendering of the Canadian Immigration Story gallery at Pier 21.



NEWS

Amazing Expansion

The Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 will in May reveal the results of a \$25-million, six-month expansion project.

The national museum in Halifax nearly doubled its size to add a new exhibit about the broader Canadian immigration story. It also revamped an exhibit dedicated to Pier 21's history as an immigration facility from 1928 to 1971.

"The Canadian Immigration Story is going to tell a thematic story of immigration — of journey, arrival, belonging, and impact," said Pier 21 CEO Marie Chapman. This section will showcase the contributions immigrants have

made to Canada. An oral history gallery will allow visitors to listen to clips of newcomers recalling their experiences of coming to and settling in Canada.

"It is a dream come true," Chapman said. "Story and technology go hand in hand and we feel so fortunate because we can continue to connect and reflect."

Pier 21 was the gateway to Canada for one million immigrants from 1928 to 1971. It also served as the departure point for 500,000 members of the Canadian military during the Second World War.

— Danelle Cloutier

SIGNPOSTS



Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, Alberta

The name Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump may seem a little odd at first, but it makes perfect sense if you know the story behind it. For thousands of years, First Nations peoples on the western plains hunted bison by causing herds to stampede off cliffs to their deaths. This method produced tonnes of fresh meat while reducing the danger to hunters. As for this unique place name, according to legend it arose from a tragic accident that befell a young Aboriginal hunter. Wanting to watch the bison fall off the cliff during a hunt, the hunter was unfortunately crushed during the stampede and died of a severe head injury. The original Blackfoot name is *estipah-skikikini-kots*, which translates to "where we got our heads smashed."

— Taylor Chartier, *Canada's History intern*.

TAKE THE DAY OFF ...



APRIL 7 To remember the fire that destroyed much of the core of Toronto on this date in 1849. The fire, which began early in the morning near King and Jarvis streets, spread quickly through wooden buildings constructed along laneways, eventually consuming many businesses and homes as well as the St. James Cathedral and Toronto's first city hall. New building codes did not prevent another catastrophic fire in 1904.

BY THE NUMBERS



Members of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet dance in a scene from *The Nutcracker*.

Royal Winnipeg Ballet

In 1939, ballet directors Gweneth Lloyd and Betty Farrally founded the Winnipeg Ballet Club. Today, the dance company is known worldwide as the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. In late 2014, the federal government designated the creation of the ballet company an Event of National Historic Significance. — Jessica Knapp

1953

Year Queen Elizabeth II granted the company its royal charter.

150

Minimum number of performances each season.

26

Weeks per year spent performing around the world.

20

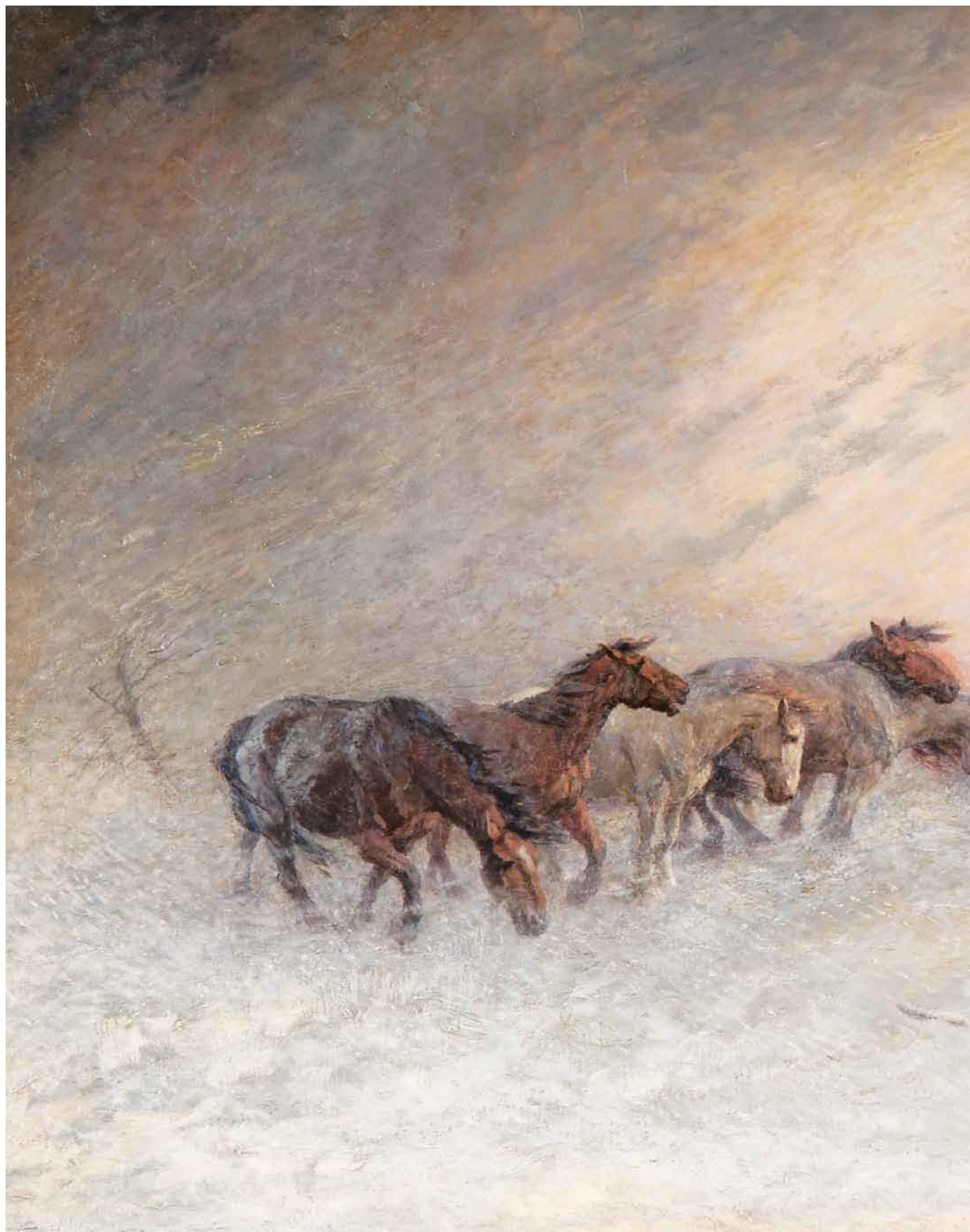
Number of professional dancers who travel with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet.

Kilograms of equipment that travels with the company for each performance.

25,000

1,500

Number of students who study with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet.





BRUSH STROKES

The Blizzard

by Inglis Sheldon-Williams,
1916, oil on canvas,
93.7 x 130.2 cm

Born in England in 1870, Inglis Sheldon-Williams came to Canada in 1887. Over the next decade he alternated between homesteading in what is now southeast Saskatchewan and periods at art school back in England. He served in the Boer War, created magazine illustrations, and exhibited his art in Europe, before settling in Regina in 1913.

There, with support from lawyer and art collector Norman MacKenzie, Sheldon-Williams embarked upon what are considered the best years of his artistic career, creating images that portray the starkness, vibrancy, and sometimes fury of life on the prairies. In his 1923 painting *The Fire Guard*, a driver and a team of horses work to break the advance of a grass fire; the powerful animals seem ready to burst from the canvas and its frame as they try to escape the clouds of white and grey smoke that threaten to engulf the scene.

In 1916's *The Blizzard*, shown here, struggling horses are instead captured amid the swirls of snow produced by a prairie storm. Fading light glows through the squall thanks to Sheldon-Williams' familiarity with impressionistic techniques.

That same year Sheldon-Williams helped to found an art school at Regina College, and two years later he served as a Canadian war artist in Europe. He died in England in 1940.

— Phil Koch

For more, read *The Vaults: Art from the MacKenzie Art Gallery and the University of Regina Collection*.

OBJECT OF INTEREST

Maurice Richard's hockey stick

Montreal Canadiens winger Maurice Richard scored his five-hundredth goal with this stick on October 19, 1957. For eighteen seasons in the National Hockey League, the "Rocket" dominated professional hockey, electrifying spectators and blazing his way into the record books with

626 career goals. Richard retired from professional hockey in 1960. He died in May 2000 at the age of seventy-eight.

This artifact is from the national collection of the Canadian Museum of History.



MOMENT

Chocolate barred

Soaring cost of candy kick-starts kids' protest

In 1947, as postwar price controls were relaxed, costs began to rise. In a move children found devastating, the price of a chocolate bar jumped from five cents to eight cents. Starting on Vancouver Island, and moving across Canada, young consumers began to protest. With only a nickel allowance, many could no longer afford to buy their favourite weekly treat.

In Abbotsford, British Columbia, Philip Sheffield High School students organized a rally. They encouraged the younger Abbotsford Elementary School students to take part in order to swell their ranks. After school on May 1, 1947, the protesters gathered in the central shopping district and began to shout their slogans and brandish their

signs. While some local shoppers sympathized with their plight, merchants did not welcome their antics and summoned the constable. *The Abbotsford, Sumas and Matsqui News* records that the protesters were reprimanded for breaking the peace and sent home, thus ending Abbotsford's first protest march.

Similar marches were held in other cities, with police being called to break up large gatherings. Eventually, the movement fell apart after the *Toronto Evening Telegram* linked it to a Communist plot.

— Kris Foulds, collections manager of The Reach Gallery Museum in Abbotsford, B.C.



Children in Abbotsford, B.C., protest in 1947

LIVING HISTORY

Telling women's history in story and song

Ottawa teacher launches CD and tour showcasing storytelling

By day, Ruth Stewart-Verger is a schoolteacher in Ottawa who knows the name of every student in her school. By night, she is a storyteller. Her favourite stories are those of the many women who have played key roles in Canadian history.

Her love of history and storytelling led Stewart-Verger to research and create performance works about such women as early prairie settler Marie-Anne Lagimodière, suffragist Emily Murphy, and 1930s MP Martha Black.

It all started in 2002, when she became enamoured with the story of Lagimodière and dove into various archives to research it. The first performance was held at Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa beneath a large painting of voyageurs racing the rapids.

It was so moving that members of the audience wiped away tears as the last words and notes faded away. The piece toured in Ontario, Quebec, Alberta, British Columbia, and Yukon.

The following year, Stewart-Verger performed Murphy's story as part of the eleventh annual National Storytelling Conference in Ottawa. Performing next to statues of the "Famous Five" — a group of women, including Murphy, who fought to have women declared "persons" under the law — Stewart-Verger told the story while rain fell and lightning flashed.

Member of
Parliament
Martha Black.

Working with Charlie Sohmer, Chris MacLean, and Teresa Healy, Stewart-Verger created two CDs that tell the stories of Lagimodière and Murphy in words and in music.

Stewart-Verger holds workshops and performs across Canada. She will be headlining the Fort Edmonton Storytelling Festival in May with her story of Lagimodière. Hear an excerpt from the Lagimodière CD at CanadasHistory.ca/Storyteller.

— Nelle Oosterom



NEWS



The new location of the Fugitive Slave Chapel in London, Ontario

On the move

A stone church formerly used by runaway American slaves has been safely relocated to a new location in London, Ontario. Built in London in 1848, the church was used until 1869, at which time the congregation relocated to a new chapel in the city. Last winter, the original chapel was moved to a new location adjacent to the new church site.

The move was prompted by a threat from developers to demolish the 1848 chapel to create space for a parking lot. Fundraising for the Fugitive Slave Chapel Preservation Project began two years ago.

By the 1850s, London was home to more than 500 former slaves who had fled the United States for Canada.

TAKE THE DAY OFF ...



MAY 2 To mark the opening on this date in 1864 of the Merchants Bank of Halifax, which developed into the country's largest financial institution — the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC). The bank's original partners aimed to finance fishing and timber operations as well as trade between North America

and Europe. Following Confederation the bank expanded across the Maritime region, and by the 1880s it had operations in the Caribbean and Montreal.

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Musket evokes spiritual side of hunting

According to Aboriginal oral tradition, side plates similar to the one seen on this British trade musket were spiritually significant for hunters and ensured fruitful hunting. The serpent side plate on this firearm also told Aboriginal traders about its origin. Beginning in 1690 English gun makers used decorative side plates in place of loops and scrolls, and by the mid-1790s serpent side plates were standard

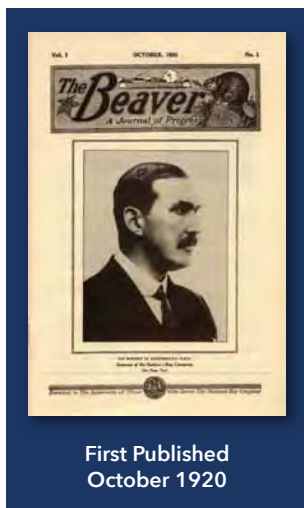
on British trade guns. This 1871 musket is a later version of a type traded by the North West and Hudson's Bay companies to Aboriginal hunters in the 1700s and 1800s. Made by J.E. Barnett and Sons, the gun has a flintlock firing mechanism, which uses a piece of flint on the end of a short

hammer to create a spark. Firearms were expensive because only blacksmiths at posts could repair them and because ammunition had to be bought through trade.

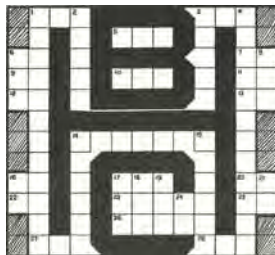
— Danelle Cloutier



IN THE BEAVER ...



First Published
October 1920



What's a twelve-letter word to describe what the Hudson's Bay Company is noted for? That's just one of the clues in the crossword puzzle that appears in the March 1925 issue. "We do not offer any prizes for the solution of this cross-word puzzle," the editors warned. "But we hope the solving of it will provide a little amusement."



A profitable method of extracting oil from sand had not yet been found, but George Hunter's photo essay in the Spring 1955 issue is dedicated to Alberta's proverbial gold mine. The photos show the bituminous sands along the Athabasca River near Fort McMurray, technicians using magnetometers, and a geological survey crew.



The Autumn 1985 issue published an excerpt from *Company of Adventurers*, Peter C. Newman's unofficial history of the Hudson's Bay Company. An advertisement in the same issue calls it the story "of the men who against all odds explored the new land, fought for furs and survival, and stayed to found a nation."

The Beaver magazine was originally founded as a Hudson's Bay Company publication in 1920. To read stories from past issues, go to CanadasHistory.ca/TradingPost. To explore the history of the Hudson's Bay Company, go to hbcheritage.ca.



BORN of FIRE & BLOOD

When John McCrae wrote "In Flanders Fields" a hundred years ago, he unleashed a force more powerful than any weapon of war.

by J. Andrew Ross

A

s it is immortalized in a popular video clip, the writing of the poem “In Flanders Fields” appears spontaneous and even divinely inspired. Major John McCrae, as played by Colm Feore in the Heritage Minute from Historica Canada, is smoking a cigarette while wounded men are being moved past him on stretchers. As artillery fire flashes overhead in the night sky, McCrae sees some poppies, quickly scribbles the lines of the poem, and hands it off to another soldier, who asks what it is. He replies, in a British accent, “I’m not sure.”

The video’s dramatization is compelling, but the reality was likely quite different. For starters, John McCrae, a second-generation Canadian of Scottish descent, spoke with a Canadian accent. And McCrae, an asthmatic, favoured a pipe, not cigarettes. Moreover, McCrae was an able poet who took care with his writing and refined it thoroughly.

In this poem, like his many others, McCrae was trying to make sense of a changing world through the images and words that were readily available while also drawing on the poetic traditions of the past. The poem was said by his friend Edward Morrison to have been “born of fire and blood during the hottest phase of the Second Battle of Ypres” in the spring of 1915, but its elements had also gestated in peacetime during the many years McCrae had spent practising poetry, medicine, and soldiery. His success at melding the past with the present zeitgeist was such that the poem not only became the most famous of the war but arguably made McCrae, along with General Sir Arthur Currie and flying ace Billy Bishop, one of Canada’s best-known soldiers. And he inspired others to make the poppy the primary symbol through which conflicts from the First World War onward are now commemorated.

John McCrae was born on St. Andrew’s Day (November 30) in 1872 in Guelph, Ontario. His father, David, dutifully managed the family woollen mill but also indulged his true calling as a soldier, founding a local militia artillery unit and joining Canada’s small permanent force for a time. John, known to all as Jack, shared his father’s enthusiasm for the outdoors and for military drill. At fourteen he joined the Highland Cadet Corps, soon became an officer, and, in 1887, won a competition as the best drilled military cadet in Ontario.



Officers of the 1st Brigade Canadian Field Artillery, circa 1901. John McCrae stands at the far left.

His soldiering side was balanced by the gentler qualities instilled in him by his mother, Janet, the daughter of a minister in the Church of Scotland. Along with his siblings, elder brother Tom and younger sister Geills, McCrae learned the value of education — especially reading, poetry, and music — and the humility of Christian practice. Always at the top of his class, John McCrae became the first Guelph student to be offered a scholarship to the University of Toronto.

McCrae grew into a tall, lanky young man who was charming in an awkward sort of way. His clothes sometimes didn't fit him very well, and when posing for photographs he took pains to hide his crooked front teeth — although many said they added to his boyish appeal. Energetic, sociable, and popular, he immersed himself in activities while at college: He sang in the glee club, played rugby (when his asthma would allow it), joined K (Varsity) Company of the Queen's Own Rifles militia unit, and attended church regularly.

His friend Stephen Leacock, who socialized with McCrae during his student days in Toronto and later in Montreal, said of him: "Busy though he always was, McCrae seemed to find time for social life, and was in great demand at Montreal dinner parties. His fund of stories that was never exhausted made him the treasure of his hostess, and even when his hostess had withdrawn, Jack's stories did not exactly come to a full stop."

Between his studies and his social life, McCrae sketched and wrote. His drawings were of pastoral scenes — rural cottages, boats at anchor, and, in 1896, a line drawing of corn poppies much like the ones that would inspire his famous poem. His poetic themes were typical of the age — late Victorian musings about spirituality, inner conflict, loss, and death — but he also drew from personal experience. In the fall of 1895, during his second year of medi-

cal studies in Toronto (he had obtained a B.A. in 1894), he was particularly affected by the death of Alice McCrae (no relation), the sister of a classmate, with whom he had struck up a friendship. After her death from typhoid fever, he was moved to write this sad verse: "In the cold moist earth we laid her/ When the forest cast a leaf/ And we wept that one so lovely/ Should have a life so brief."

By the time he graduated at the top of his class in 1898 with a bachelor of medicine degree, McCrae had published over a dozen poems in venues like *The Canadian* magazine, and several short stories, including one that had won a prize from *Saturday Night* magazine.

After graduation, McCrae went to Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, the foremost medical education institution of its day, where his brother Tom had been working with William Osler, the great Canadian medical educator. Osler became a lifelong mentor and friend to both McCrae brothers. John McCrae was to take up a fellowship in pathology at McGill University in Montreal the following year. But global events interrupted his plans.

In the fall of 1899, the Second Boer War in South Africa broke out. Like many of his generation, McCrae was an imperialist and was eager to join the fight. He deferred his McGill fellowship to go to South Africa as a lieutenant with D Battery, a Guelph contingent of the Royal Canadian Artillery. Before he left, *The Globe*

McCrae's unit had the dubious distinction of being among the first to face a chlorine gas attack.



Dr. John McCrae, far right, with young patients, student doctors, and a nurse at Alexandra Hospital for Contagious Diseases in Montreal, circa 1908.

published his poem “Disarmament,” wherein he has the dead weigh in on global affairs: “But from a million British graves took birth/ A silent voice — the millions spake as one —/ If ye have righted all the wrongs of earth/ Lay by the sword! Its work and ours is done.” The sentiment brings to mind Rudyard Kipling’s “The White Man’s Burden,” published earlier that year and pasted into McCrae’s scrapbook. A great admirer of the English poet, the young physician would meet him in person while in South Africa and write of the encounter in his diary: “We met the High Priest of it all, and I had a five minutes’ chat with him — Kipling I mean. He visited the camp. He looks like his pictures, and is very affable.”

During the year he spent in South Africa, McCrae served as an artillery officer, engaging in battles, gaining experience, earning the respect of his men, and winning the Queen’s Medal. All in all, he had a good war experience, writing to his sister, “I certainly do like soldiering!” But he was also happy to return to academic life in Montreal.

For the next fourteen years McCrae carried out research in a variety of areas, including bacteriology, stomach cancer, pneumonia, vascular deformities, and even history — he wrote about Jeanne Mance and the foundation of Hôtel-Dieu, the oldest hospital in Montreal. His reputation was such that he was asked to co-author an undergraduate pathology textbook and to contribute chapters on diseases of the esophagus and the kidney to Osler’s multi-volume series *A System of Medicine*. In 1910, he obtained his doctor of medicine degree.

McCrae’s special interest became children and infection. He carried out a multi-year study of scarlet fever at Alexandra Hospital for Contagious Diseases in the working-class Montreal neighbourhood of Pointe-Saint-Charles. Later, his friend Andrew Macphail wrote of McCrae, “Through all his life, and through all his letters, dogs and children followed him as shadows follow men.” Macphail, who was a professor of medical history and the editor of the *Montreal Medical Journal* and the *McGill University Magazine*, published several of McCrae’s poems in this period. Among them were ones whose metres and themes would anticipate “In Flanders Fields,” such as the “The Unconquered Dead” and “The Warrior” (1907) and “The Night Cometh” (1913).

McCrae’s greatest gift may have been as a teacher. He was a natural storyteller whose ability to render complex concepts comprehensible endeared him to students and colleagues. He was constantly in demand for courses at McGill and for many years commuted 160 kilometres to Burlington, Vermont, to lecture at the University of Vermont for one day a week. McCrae’s talent as a raconteur may have been one of the reasons he was invited by Governor General Earl Grey to be the expedition physician for a viceregal trip to Hudson Bay in 1910. Afterward, Lord Grey said, “We travelled three thousand miles, and McCrae had a story for every mile.”

Given McCrae’s sociability, biographers have often wondered why he never married. His life in Guelph, Toronto, and Montreal

certainly put him in the company of many strong and beautiful women. Evidence from his letters suggests he was not immune to their attractions. Aside from Alice McCrae, over the years there were other romantic friendships, including an intense ten days in Paris in the company of Beatriz D’Arniere, a French singing coach. In letters to Edward Johnson, the renowned Guelph-born opera singer whom she later married, D’Arniere revealed that McCrae had attempted to kiss her. Before the war, he made a proposal of marriage to Nona Gwyn, Sir William Osler’s niece and the younger sister of Tom McCrae’s wife, Amy. Gwyn declined, a refusal that may have broken his heart.

By the time the war broke out in August 1914, McCrae was forty-one and still a bachelor. Although he was under little pressure to enlist, duty called. He wrote to a friend, “I am going because I think every bachelor, especially if he has experience of war, ought to go. I am really rather afraid, but more afraid to stay at home with my conscience.” He signed up for the Canadian artillery, which was now run by Lieutenant Colonel Edward Morrison, his friend and fellow officer from the South African campaign. He was assigned to Morrison’s brigade as medical officer. McCrae was not the

only older man to step forward. His friend Macphail enlisted at age fifty, and McCrae’s own father, David, aged seventy, helped to raise an entire artillery unit and took it to England, although he was prevented from continuing to the front.

McCrae’s unit shipped over with the First Contingent of the Canadian Expeditionary Force in October and trained on Salisbury Plain in England. In February 1915 the Canadians moved over to France and to the front lines. The CEF had avoided the carnage of the fall of 1914, but in the spring of 1915 the industrial-scale destruction escalated. At the Second Battle of Ypres that began on April 22, McCrae’s unit had the dubious distinction of being among the first to face a German chlorine gas attack. McCrae was spared a direct encounter with the caustic green-yellow mist but wrote: “Of one’s feelings all this night — of the asphyxiated French soldiers — of the women and children — of the cheery steady British reinforcements that moved up quietly past us, going up, not back — I could write, but you can imagine.”

A field dressing station was established at the Canadian Field Artillery Headquarters dugout on the Yser Canal. There, McCrae focused on treating the wounded. Morrison later wrote that he and McCrae both watched as a nearby regiment buried their dead and lines of crosses started to spread, and that they often heard larks singing “between the crash of the shell and the report of the guns.” The shrapnel from those exploding shells inflicted terrible wounds. On May 2, a young battery officer, twenty-two-year-old Lieutenant Alexis Helmer, was blown to pieces from a direct hit by an eight-inch shell. For his funeral men had to gather up bits of his flesh, sew them into sandbags, and arrange them in the form of a body. McCrae wrote that he recited from memory the committal service “as well as I could.”



John McCrae in 1914. A major at the beginning of the war, he was later promoted to lieutenant colonel.

Helmer's death is said to have moved McCrae to write "In Flanders Fields," apparently his first poem of the war. Some sources say he wrote it in twenty minutes and discarded it to be picked up by another soldier. He likely continued working on it as he paused between the arrival of batches of wounded. After being refined over the spring, summer, and fall, the poem was submitted to Britain's *The Spectator*, which refused it, and then *Punch*, another British publication, which published it anonymously in its December 8, 1915, issue. Macphail recognized it immediately from its similarity in metre and rhyme to "The Night Cometh," and McCrae's identity became more widely known after *Punch*'s annual index named him (though it misspelled his name). A critic later noted its "perfect rondeau form," which began with the traditional pastoral imagery of the Edwardian era but ended with a plea from the dead:

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.
We are the dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.
Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.*

Almost immediately the poem was being memorized by soldiers, and it began to resonate with the civilian public as well. In January 1916 it was reprinted in Boston's *Living Age*, just as American President Woodrow Wilson was on a nationwide whistle-stop campaign to generate support for "preparedness" in case of war. (The U.S. would enter the war just over a year later, on April 6, 1917.) The image of a torch being passed from dead to living, and being raised high — like the Statue of Liberty — entered American public consciousness. Between 1917 and 1922 at least fifty-eight composers set McCrae's poem to music, including John Philip Sousa and Charles Ives. Americans also began replying to the sentiments of the poem, which they also knew under the title "We Shall Not Sleep." The most famous "reply" was R.W. Lillard's "America's Answer," which began: "Rest ye in peace, ye Flanders dead/ The fight that ye so bravely led/ We've taken up...."

The poem also found its way into advertising. By December 1917 the line "If ye Break Faith — We Shall Not Sleep" was being used as the centrepiece of the Canadian Victory Loan campaign and was credited with raising millions of dollars.

Spreading renown helped another McCrae poem, "The Anxious Dead," be accepted in the pages of *The Spectator*. But his newfound fame seemed to mean little to McCrae. Not long after Ypres, he had been posted, against his wishes, to No. 3 Canadian General



Hospital (McGill University) at Dannes-Camier, near Boulogne, France, and put in charge of medicine with a promotion to lieutenant colonel. Given the choice, he would have stayed at the front. As he told fellow soldier Cyril Allinson, "all the goddamn doctors in the world will not win this bloody war. What we need is more and more fighting men."

McCrae was never the same after Ypres — a battle in which half of his brigade had been slaughtered. A nursing sister who had known him for a long time did not recognize him after Ypres. "He appeared to her so old, so worn, his face lined and ashen grey in colour, his expression dull, his action slow and heavy," wrote Macphail. Apparently troubled by survivor's guilt, McCrae insisted



The Second Battle of Ypres, 22 April to 25 May 1915 by war artist Richard Jack. The events that took place during this battle had a traumatic effect on McCrae and inspired his famous poem.

on sleeping in a tent in emulation of the troops at the front, even though his new post at No. 3 General Hospital provided him with comfortable lodging.

Still, there were some lighter moments. McCrae had been able to retain his horse, Bonfire, after leaving the artillery. Later, a local French spaniel named Bonneau befriended both McCrae and Bonfire. On quiet afternoons, the trio would enjoy jaunts in the countryside around Boulogne.

McCrae also found solace in teaching. He continued to mentor younger officers and also pursued his interest in infectious diseases, particularly the typhoid fever that brought high temperatures, fatigue, and raging diarrhea. It was the disease that had killed Alice

McCrae and in past wars was the scourge of armies. An officer who had worked under McCrae, Lieutenant Norman Guiou, recalled hearing McCrae lecture on the topic in January 1918. McCrae told the assembled officers, "If I can go home to Canada and persuade the government to inoculate every man, woman, and child against typhoid fever, I would consider my life well spent." One can easily imagine McCrae taking part in the Canadian vaccination debates of the 1920s, but it was not to be.

On January 26, 1918, McCrae was found asleep in a chair in the officers' mess. He took to his bed and was still there when news came that he had been named consulting physician to the British



Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae with his horse, Bonfire, and dog, Bonneau, in France in December 1917, about a month before McCrae's death.

First Army, a singular honour for a Canadian. McCrae suspected he had pneumonia, and, while tests were run, his friend British Army Surgeon-General Sir Bertrand Dawson arranged to move him to a British officers hospital. Despite the high level of care, McCrae fell into a coma and died in the early hours of January 28 of pneumonia aggravated by suppurative (bacterial) meningitis.

His funeral on January 29 was attended by nearly all the commanders in the area, including General Currie, the Canadian Corps commander, as well as a large delegation from all the local hospitals and units. Forlornly following the coffin on its gun carriage was Bonfire, bedecked in white ribbons and with McCrae's boots reversed in the stirrups. The McGill hospital reportedly went looking for poppies to spread on McCrae's grave. It being winter, they had to make due with artificial ones from Paris.

McCrae was widely eulogized in newspapers and medical journals in Britain, Canada, and the United States, but over time his medical career was overshadowed by the resonant power of his poem and the symbolism it unleashed. The poem's imagery of keeping faith and holding a torch high found expression in both obvious places, like the hundreds of monuments and plaques that were erected to commemorate the war dead, and also the less likely

ones, like the Montreal Canadiens dressing room at the Montreal Forum, where it exhorted players: "To you from failing hands we throw/ The torch; be yours to hold it high." And, of course, the poem became ubiquitous at commemorative services each November around the world.

Yet the poem was overaken by the legacy of its central symbol, the poppy. At first named the Flanders poppy, it soon became the Remembrance poppy. McCrae had chosen the red corn poppy for its actual presence on the battlefield, but the relationship between poppies and war had a long and ancient tradition, one that also involved the corn poppy's pain-relieving cousin, the opium poppy. British anthropologist Nicholas J. Saunders writes of "the 'long sleep' of opium narcosis twinned with the ubiquitous corn poppy of freshly churned battlefields."

The poppy as a symbol of remembrance came about after a civilian campaign led by American teacher Moina Michael. Her campaign was launched at a conference of the Overseas YMCA War Secretaries held in New York City on November 9, 1918 — two days before the guns in Europe fell silent. American veterans groups quickly adopted the idea. Around the same time, a French woman named Anna Guérin proposed having poppies made by French widows worn in every buttonhole in the Western world. Guérin soon convinced the British to adopt the poppy as the symbol of the new veterans organizations that emerged from the war.

No doubt McCrae would have been surprised by the postwar life of his poem, but also pleased. His fear was that he and his generation had dropped the torch of their fallen comrades. Although McCrae did not live to see it, the torch became a flower that persists to this day as the symbol for war and remembrance. 🐾

// Watch a video of McCrae's life at CanadasHistory.ca/McCrae

The funeral of John McCrae on January 29, 1918. McCrae's horse has the poet's boots reversed in the stirrups.





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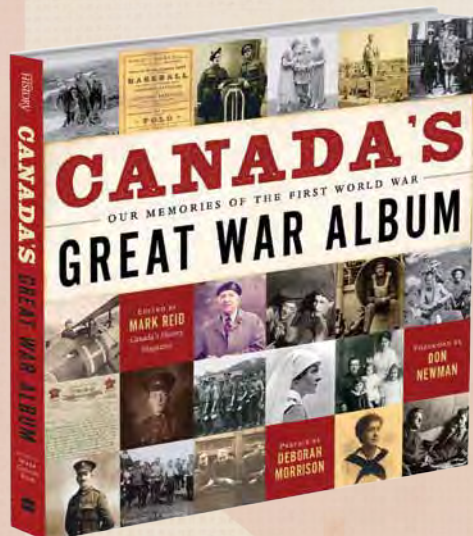
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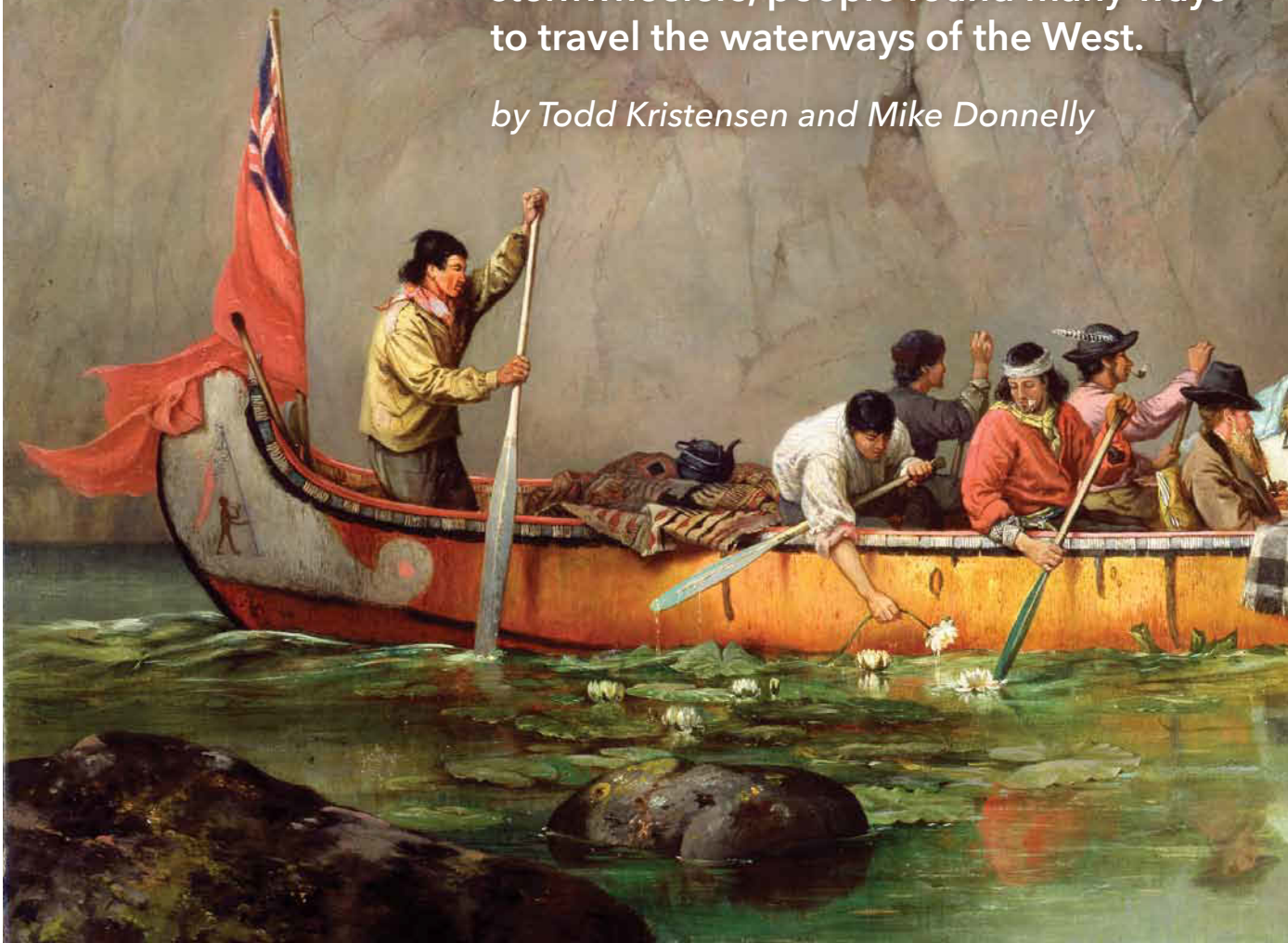
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Water Ways

From flimsy bull boats to powerful sternwheelers, people found many ways to travel the waterways of the West.

by Todd Kristensen and Mike Donnelly



Western Canada's boating history stretches back a long way. Since recorded time, vessels of one kind or another have carried people over water — families were delivered to hunting grounds, fishermen to teeming shoals, explorers to new frontiers, voyageurs to bustling trade centres, and fortune seekers to new opportunities.

Canoe Manned by Voyageurs Passing a Waterfall by Frances Anne Hopkins, 1869.





Crossing rivers in buffalo skins

On the prairies, circular skin-covered vessels known as bull boats were among the earliest watercraft. They likely originated thousands of years ago and were used to cross large rivers. A bull boat was made of buffalo hide stretched over a wood frame. The small circular craft enabled safe, if unsteady, river crossings. Like teepees, bull boats were the responsibility of women, who did the building and the paddling.

They were generally not used for long-distance travel because prairie rivers meander so much that people moved faster on foot. As historian Norman Henderson put it, “a canoe on the prairies was about as well suited as a horseman in the muskeg.” Since the indigenous people of the plains did not use canoes, their participation in the fur trade was limited. HBC explorer Anthony Henday attempted to engage the Blackfoot in the fur trade in the 1750s, but he was rejected because they could not paddle to distant trade posts and had little incentive to do so. On the unobstructed grasslands, dogs and, later, horses were the main means of transporting goods.

Borrowing beaver teeth to build dugouts

North of the plains, in the boreal forest, dense bush and swampy muskeg made overland travel far more difficult. It was here that the Dene and northern Cree built dugout canoes to transport themselves over rivers and lakes. The dugouts were formed by patiently chipping at soaked or partially burned logs — usually spruce or cottonwood — with stone axes and adzes.

The finishing work was performed with a clever tool borrowed

from nature’s carpenter, the beaver: Boat builders used chisels made of beaver incisors joined to wooden handles. Because beaver teeth have prominent enamel ridges separated by softer dentine, which wears away, constantly exposing new sharp enamel, the boat builders were effectively using a self-sharpening chisel. Beaver-tooth chisels have been found at archaeological sites from Alberta to Manitoba.

Moulding birchbark into sacred watercraft

Compared to the dugout, the birchbark canoe was a refined vessel. Long sheets of paper birch were delicately warped and moulded into place, then sewn together with tree roots. Holes were glued shut with sap or — in the case of the oilsands region of northeastern Alberta — raw bitumen.

Finely tuned skills were needed to harvest the perfect bark, steam the sheets, bend the canoe frame, and lash it together. As a result, a canoe was a great source of pride among the northern Dene and Cree. Canoe construction was more than functional; it was sacred. Some Chipewyan believed the journey to the afterlife was made in a stone canoe; if the soul was pure it floated to a land of plenty, but if the soul was wicked the boat sank to the depths.

The birchbark canoe enabled a degree of mobility that defined life in the boreal forest. People hunted caribou and moose by canoe at water crossings, and they used the canoe to set and check gillnets for fish. At night, torches were mounted on the ends of canoes to attract fish that were speared from the boat. When local game failed, people could move great distances to find food. Travel by



Opposite page: A Mandan woman paddles a bull boat similar to those used on the Canadian prairies, circa 1908.

Left: Amerindian portaging a canoe by Cornelius Krieghoff, circa 1849.

Below: A York boat on the Nelson River in northern Manitoba, circa 1913.

canoe also expanded social networks and enabled the spread of knowledge and information.

Breaking bones for the fur trade

Birchbark canoes were quickly adopted by fur traders, with a wide variety of canoes built for the purpose. The largest in use in the West — the *canot du nord* — could carry up to a tonne. At Fort Chipewyan, Fort Edmonton, and Rocky Mountain House — major canoe-building centres — First Nations women were often hired to lash and caulk the boats.

When Hudson's Bay Company governor Sir George Simpson travelled from Hudson Bay to the Pacific Ocean in 1828, he did so mostly by canoe. The voyageurs hired to transport him and his trade goods worked in eighteen-hour stretches, covering more than ten thousand kilometres in less than a hundred days — one of the longest voyages ever attempted in North America in one season.

Being on the water from dusk to dawn was dreary, but it was the burden of backpacking gear over portages that broke men and deformed their bones. Voyageur skeletons found at Fort Edmonton and Rocky Mountain House in the late 1960s and early 1970s by University of Alberta researchers had “severe spinal abnormalities indicative of stress-loading,” according to a report by lead forensic researcher Ping Lai. The shoulders, elbows, hands, and feet of the voyageurs exhibited “pronounced osteoarthritis and muscle attachments.” Even the men's jawbones were altered through the use of tumplines strapped across the forehead to help spread weight during painful portages.



Dragging boats over forest floors

By 1821, the use of the birchbark canoe for transporting furs was being slowly abandoned in favour of the York boat. The flat-bottomed boat became the main mode of transportation between York Factory on Hudson Bay and the Hudson's Bay Company's inland trading posts.

Based on an Orkney design, a York boat could carry three tonnes — triple the weight that could be held by the largest canoe. However, work did not get any easier for the boatmen. Each boat required six to ten men — the same number as a *canot du nord* — but the weight each man had to haul over portages increased threefold. On portages, the heavy boats needed about three metres of clearance to be dragged over forest trails on rollers. In some sections, tramways were built to transport the boats. On the water, the men used brute strength to manage oars that were six metres long and eleven kilograms in weight.

One of the longest and most difficult portages was at Methye Portage (Portage La Loche) in northwestern Saskatchewan. It was nineteen kilometres long with a steep section, and trading companies tried with limited success to use horses, oxen, and local First Nations people to do the back-breaking labour of portaging the York boat cargo.

Steaming into a new era

Meanwhile, the advent of steam power ushered in a new era of navigation in the West. Sternwheelers first appeared in British Columbia and Yukon in the 1850s. In 1859 the *Anson Northup* became the first steamboat on the Red River, arriving at present-day Winnipeg from North Dakota.

The HBC soon embarked on an ambitious plan to use steamers to supply its posts on the North Saskatchewan River from its warehouses in Upper and Lower Fort Garry (present day Winnipeg and

Selkirk in Manitoba). In 1875, the HBC's *Northcote* became the first steamer to reach Fort Edmonton, travelling west from Grand Rapids, Manitoba, on the North Saskatchewan River. Among its deliveries was the first batch of mail that a local troop of the North West Mounted Police had seen in a year.

The *Lily* soon followed. Being smaller, with a lighter draught, it assumed the shallower journey between Fort Edmonton and Prince Albert, with the *Northcote* taking the Prince Albert to Grand Rapids stretch. At Grand Rapids, goods and passengers had to go over a five-kilometre-long portage leading into Lake Winnipeg. A narrow-gauge railway completed in 1877 made the portage much easier. Once on Lake Winnipeg, a third steamboat, the *Colville*, considered one of the HBC's best boats, made the final voyage down the lake to Lower Fort Garry.

Thus, an expedition downstream from Edmonton to Winnipeg that had previously taken several weeks aboard York boats and fur



trade canoes could be accomplished in a mere ten days — but only under ideal conditions. In reality, ever-changing water levels, shifting sandbars, and submerged boulders often proved hazardous, and in some seasons the waterways were just too shallow to travel over.

North of Edmonton, a 160-kilometre-long wagon road led to the bustling boat-building centre of Athabasca Landing. For decades, this place on an elbow of the Athabasca River rang with the sound of York boats and scows being hammered into form. The launching of the *Athabasca* steamboat in 1888 enabled passengers and freight to gain easy access to nearly three thousand kilometres of navigable water to the north.

Running out of steam

With the arrival of steamboats on the boreal rivers, gone were the long and arduous days of paddling and upstream tracking of York

boats and scows. Flat-bottom scows and their boatmen were still required, however, to navigate through violent waters steamboats couldn't handle. Scow operators became legendary for their tenacity. Numerous steamboats and scows operated in tandem across the waterways of the West.

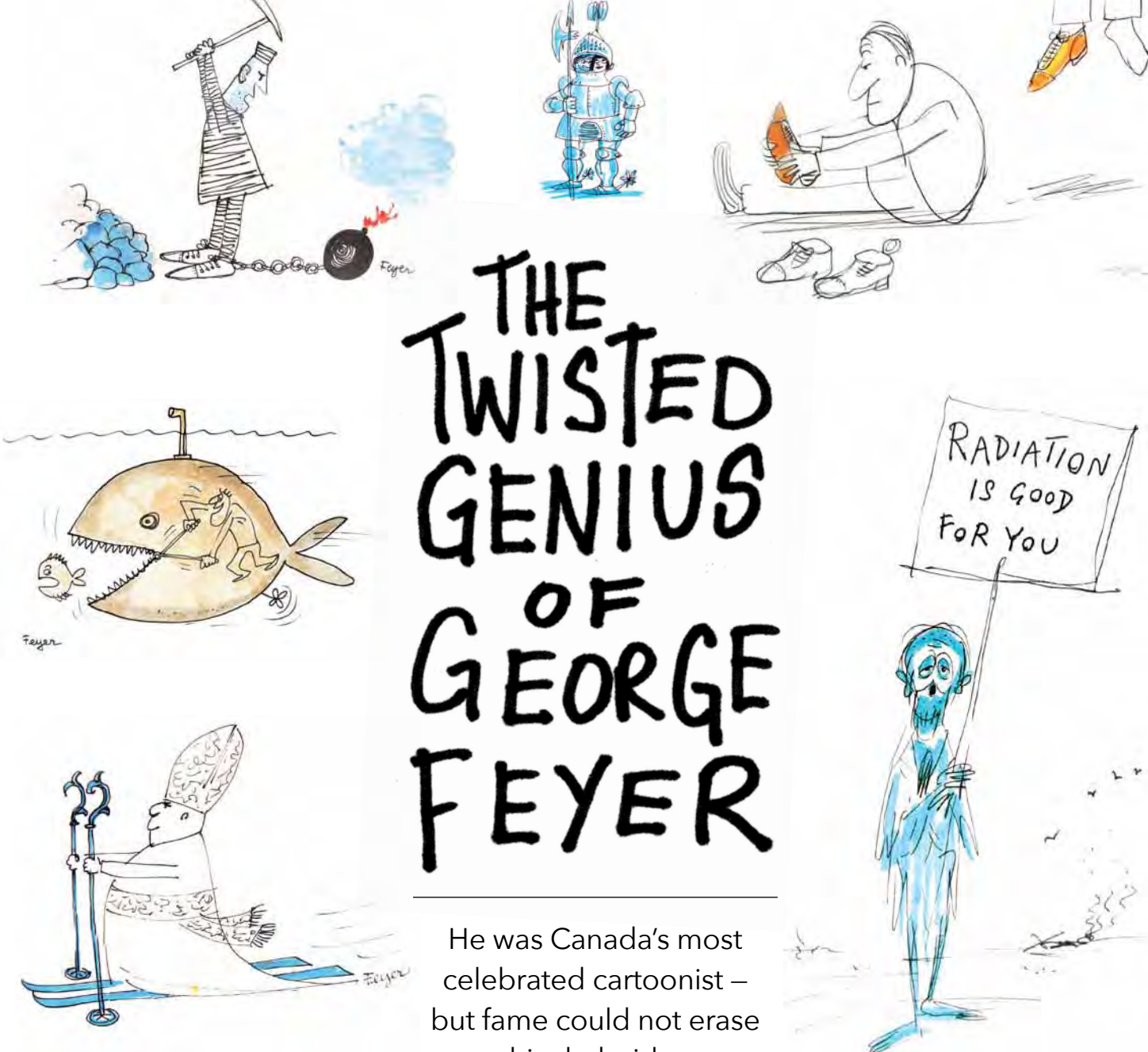
But the era of steam on boreal rivers was relatively short-lived. A railway to Edmonton built in 1891 squelched the steamboat industry on the North Saskatchewan River, and, with the completion of the railway to Fort McMurray in 1926, the days of steamboats on the Athabasca River came to an end as well.

Railways, highways, and air travel corridors have today made movement over inland waterways in the West largely obsolete. But it's worth remembering that it was the people who plied the lakes and rivers who charted the early course of Western Canadian history. 🐾

// See more illustrations at CanadasHistory.ca/Boats



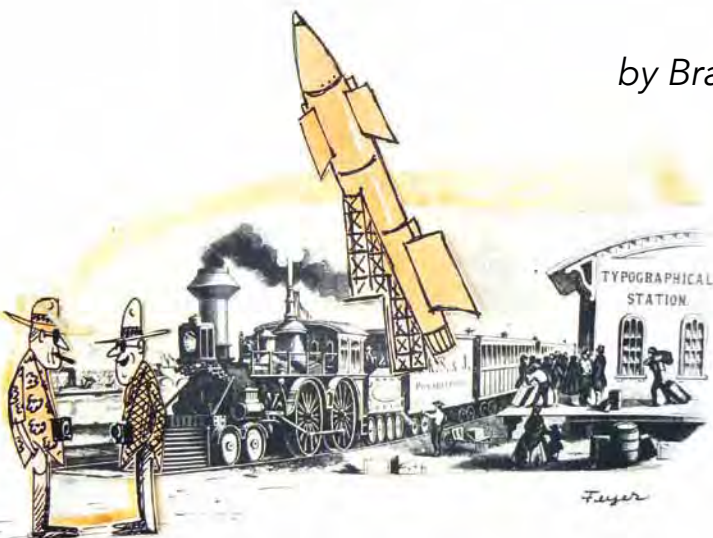
Steamer Northcote at
Fort Edmonton, 1875.

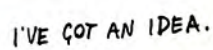
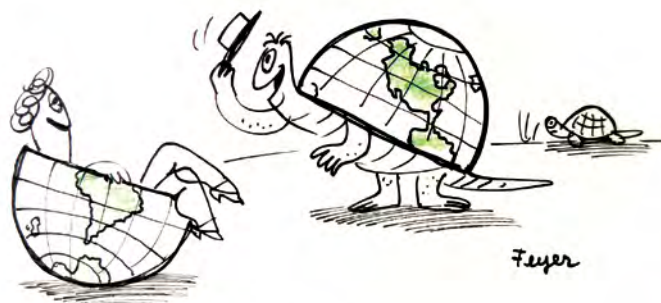
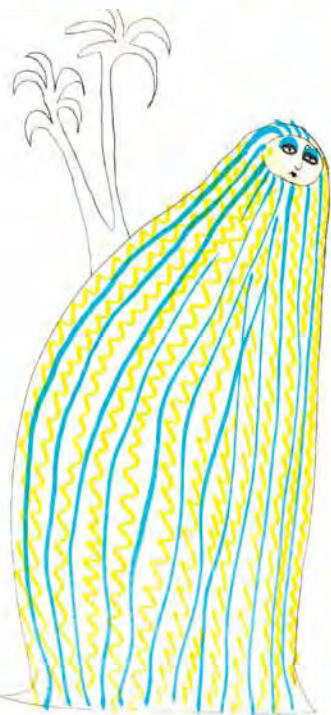


THE TWISTED GENIUS OF GEORGE FEYER

He was Canada's most
celebrated cartoonist –
but fame could not erase
his dark side.

by Brad Mackay





At a formal dinner an angry man chokes a fellow diner with one hand. In the other he's holding a fork, ready to strike. Before he can finish the job he's started, his wife butts in, "Henry, Henry! That's the wrong fork."

Mary and Joseph walk out of a pharmacy with an ad for pregnancy tests in its window. Appearing beatific, Mary strides along with a halo perched over her head. Her aggrieved husband mutters to himself, "Bullshit."

A little girl strolls away from a department store Santa Claus who is sitting dumbstruck in his chair. Off-panel an adult is shouting to the girl, "Lolita! Let's go!!"

Each of these ideas originated more than fifty years ago in the brilliant and bizarre mind of George Feyer, a tragically short-lived giant of Canadian cartooning. Equal parts madman, genius, imp, and intellectual, Feyer was a one-of-a-kind artist whose body of work defies categorization. His initial

nob with the likes of Marshall McLuhan, Peter Gzowski, George Jonas, June Callwood, and Pierre Berton.

Small in stature and raunchy by inclination, Feyer was part of a wave of Hungarian intellectuals, artists, and writers that immigrated to Canada in the years following the Second World War. Like many of his countrymen he was highly motivated and wasted little time constructing an eclectic and eventful career that was unprecedented in his day — and possibly unrivalled in ours.

Berton, a frustrated cartoonist himself, was magnetically drawn to the diminutive whirlwind. In an article published in the wake of Feyer's death in 1967, Berton praised his friend as "the most inventive man I have known," adding that "ideas crackled from George in meteoric showers."

Decades before British graffiti artist/prankster Banksy stole his first can of spray paint, Feyer was known for his penchant for drawing on anything — and anyone —

As tragic as his death was — he left behind an ex-wife and a seven-year-old son — the grander tragedy may be that, outside of family, friends, and a clutch of cartoonists, George Feyer and his epic body of work remain virtually unknown to Canadians.

György Feyer was born on February 18, 1921, in Budapest, Hungary, the only child of a lawyer father and a social-worker mother. Though he was brought up Roman Catholic, Feyer's mother was Jewish, which granted him Jewish status in the eyes of Judaic tradition.

Almost a year to the day before Feyer's birth, Miklós Horthy, a right-wing ideologue and well-known anti-Semite, seized power in Hungary, booted out Communist forces, and installed himself as head of state and regent. Horthy wasted little time implementing legislation that capped Jewish enrolment in universities at five per cent. It would be the first of many such laws to come.

These were tumultuous times, and they played a critical role in shaping Feyer's world view.

When he was a young boy, Feyer's parents divorced and later remarried other people. "I had two fathers and two mothers. I loved them all, and they were all very friendly," Feyer told McKenzie Porter in a 1960 profile in *Maclean's* magazine. "They were liberal intellectuals. They hated soldiers, flags, priests, nationalism, and all that chauvinistic stuff. And so did I. That's why I had such an unhappy time at school."

Being raised half-Jewish by four progressive parents in an increasingly fascistic country made for a unique and difficult childhood. On one hand he enjoyed the benefits of privilege; his father's money and status brought him education and respect. Feyer once recalled visiting his father's ancestral property in the Hungarian countryside and having to stop to allow peasants to kiss his nine-year-old hand. But he also spent part of his childhood living with his mother in one of Budapest's Jewish neighbourhoods. Small and with a limp that resulted from a childhood illness, Feyer made a handy target for bullies — anti-Semitic or otherwise.

Elsa Franklin, Berton's long-time producer and literary agent, said that, despite Feyer's reputation as a charming imp, "he

"It was impossible for George to pass so much as an elevator button without turning it into a cartoon."

burst of fame came thanks to his incisive gag cartoons, which cut through the pretensions and hypocrisies of 1950s North America — often without the benefit of a single word. Between 1949 and 1967, Feyer drew hundreds of cartoons for more than forty publications around the world, including *Collier's*, *Punch*, *Maclean's*, the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*. Yet cartooning was just one manifestation of his relentless, irreverent talents.

Over the course of his eighteen-year career, the polymathic Feyer wore many hats. He was a nationally known television personality — thanks to dozens of appearances on shows such as *Hockey Night in Canada*, *Wayne and Shuster*, and *The Danny Kaye Show* — a much-loved children's entertainer as a result of his work on CBC-TV, the owner of several patents for innovative animation techniques, the creator of a line of sophisticated gag gifts (like a birth-control alarm clock), and a member in good standing of Toronto's mid-century cognoscenti club, a role that saw him hob-

with his ever-present felt-tipped marker. Hotel walls, ceilings, floors, doors, toilets, sinks, mirrors, women's backs (and their chests and stomachs), even his best friend's bald head, all received the Feyer touch. In the words of Berton, "it was impossible for George to pass so much as an elevator button without turning it into a cartoon."

To Feyer, life itself was a form of art, and everything was his canvas.

With a fearless world view that predated the underground cartoonists of the 1960s — such as Robert Crumb, Frank Stack, and Gilbert Shelton — and an innovative European style that stood up next to the likes of Saul Steinberg, Jules Feiffer, and Harvey Kurtzman, Feyer's future should have been secure. But it was not to be.

Attracted by the promise of fresh opportunities and a chance to work with some of the brightest minds in Hollywood, Feyer traded Canada for California in 1965 — with very tragic results. "He died in the prime of his life, at the peak of his career," Berton lamented.



George Feyer rapidly draws cartoons to accompany a children's story read on CBC-TV's *Telestory Time* in 1953.

was quite a serious man. And I think his background had a lot to do with it: He was half-Jewish, and he came from Hungary. I think he was always troubled, and I think he suffered."

Feyer's predicament worsened with the ramping up of German- and Italian-styled fascism in Hungary during the 1930s.

"At school the other boys marched up and down and followed the flag," Feyer told *Maclean's*. "But I said to myself, 'To hell with the flag.' By the time I was fifteen I was suffocating under the bombast, the bureaucracy, and the despotism of life in a central European country."

It was a resentment he would harbour for the rest of his life. According to Berton, Feyer "had a love-hate relationship with his native land." During his annual summer vacations there he would complain loudly about the country and its people, reserving

a special hatred for the traditional gypsy music of his homeland.

Already with a well-established distaste for politics, it wasn't long before the young Feyer developed an aversion for organized religion as well. In a 1984 interview with June Callwood, Feyer's widow Michaela said that as a teenager he had been enrolled by his parents in a Jesuit boarding school. Priests at the private school "beat him so severely he screamed with nightmares for the rest of his life," she said. A year later he ran away from the school — and religion — for good.

Feyer's atheism, combined with his distaste for politics and nationalism, was the perfect recipe for the fiercely iconoclastic world view he carried with him for the rest of his years like a talisman.

"He was anti-communist, anti-fascist and anti-establishment, and he had the credentials to prove that these attitudes were not poses," Berton said. "If you asked him what his politics were, he generally replied that he was a survivor."

As a teenager Feyer began submitting cartoons to political magazines and newspapers in Hungary as a way to express his political views. To his surprise he got published — at the age of fifteen — and paid. His work was so advanced that editors didn't cotton on to the fact that he was just a teenager and paid him the standard adult fee. Suddenly "I was rich, [and] the other kids hated me for it."

The earliest known example of Feyer's cartooning appeared around 1936. Its subject was "Gloomy Sunday," a popular (and peculiar) Hungarian song about a man longing to reunite with his dead lover on the other side of the veil.

First recorded in 1935, "Gloomy Sunday" was a perverse No. 1 hit. The song's melancholy tune and maudlin lyrics proved so popular that it spawned a rash of sympathetic suicides. Lovesick men and women jumped into the Danube River with copies of the song's sheet music stuffed in their pockets. The effect was so pervasive that Hungarian authorities reportedly banned musicians from performing the song in public. (The grim legacy of "Gloomy Sunday" had a long reach. In 1968 the song's composer, Rezső Seress, tried to kill himself by jumping out of a window in his Budapest apartment. The seventy-year-old survived, only to finish the job later in a

hospital where he choked himself to death with a wire.)

Feyer's strip was titled "Chanson Triste" ("Sad Song") and wordlessly depicts what happens when two musical notes come to life on a piece of sheet music. The male note tries to woo the female note and is rebuffed. Heartbroken, he slinks away, cuts a length off of one of the staves, and hangs himself with it.

Feyer's cartoon spoofs the song on at least two levels: one by poking dark fun at the terminal lengths that notoriously depressed Hungarians were willing to go to express their devotion for "the suicide song"; and, more interestingly, by suggesting that the song was so sad that it had the power to bring its musical notations to life, just so they could kill themselves. By any measure, a sophisticated send-up — fifteen-year-old boy or not.

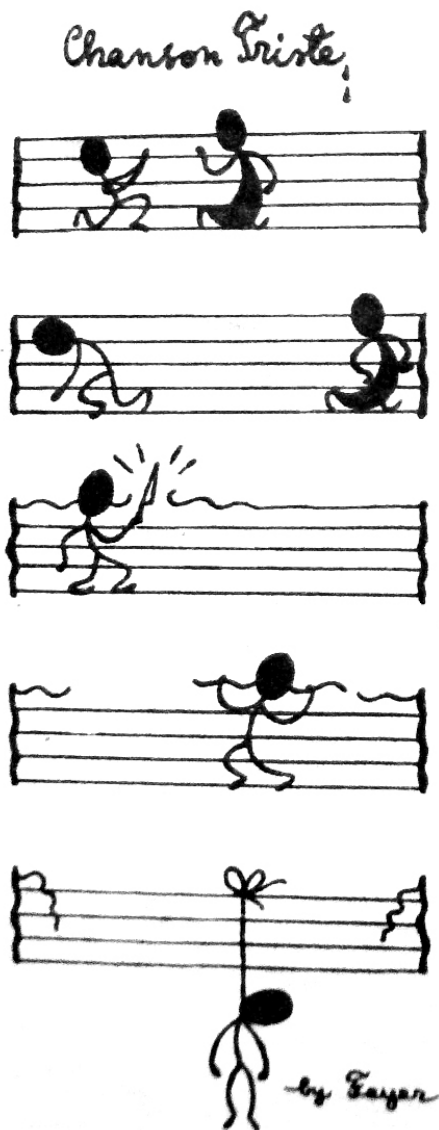
Feyer continued to earn a living as a cartoonist throughout the 1930s, even as Hungary's fascist government passed bill after bill in its increasingly anti-Jewish doctrine.

"Satire has always flourished under dictatorships," he explained later of his work at the time, "[but] you have to be very subtle. Each drawing has to have two or three meanings so that you can plead the most harmless one if the cops come to carry you off to jail."

When war broke out in the fall of 1939, his bum leg helped the nineteen-year-old Feyer avoid conscription in the Hungarian army. Over the next few years he managed to steer clear of it in a series of inventive ways — by masquerading as a small boy, wearing a fake cast on his leg, and, once, by faking insanity.

But by 1943, with Hungary officially aligned with Axis powers, the young cartoonist was finally recruited to fight the Russians on the Eastern Front. He lasted a year. The end came one night when Feyer was walking and came across a stack of corpses piled several metres high, illuminated only by moonlight. "He stared in horror and noticed that the whole mound was stirring slightly," Porter wrote in *Maclean's*. "Going closer he discovered that it was crawling with rats." The next day Feyer started planning the first of many of his escapes.

Using his cartooning skills he forged a series of documents, each one designed to gain him passage with the sixteen mili-



tary officials and bureaucrats that he knew stood between him and his home. He then exchanged his fatigues for civilian clothes and, posing as a disabled sixteen-year-old, walked some 1,500 kilometres (a month of twelve-hour days for an able-bodied person) back to Budapest.

Not that life in the increasingly fascistic and violently anti-Semitic city was going to be any easier for a half-Jewish army deserter. “For two years I looked out a window,” he told *Maclean’s*, only leaving his garret to fetch food and supplies. For money he tracked down art supplies and rubber stamps and set up a lucrative business forging passports and birth certificates. His clients included escaped prisoners of war, fugitive Jews, AWOL soldiers, and fleeing politicians — “Every so-called enemy of the state,” as he put it. “I hated the whole war so much that I didn’t give a damn who I helped to get out of it. It was a case of every poor devil for himself.”

In March 1944 Germany invaded Hungary and installed a head of state who made the anti-Semitic policies of Miklós Horthy seem progressive. By May the new government was transporting twelve thousand Jews a day by rail car to the camps at Auschwitz. According to historian Krisztian Ungvary, the pace was so frenzied that by October “the only Hungarian Jews not in concentration camps were those in Budapest and in forced labour camps.” Feyer was one of the lucky ones, for the time being.

By December Russian forces had encircled the capital city, launching the Siege of Budapest, a brutal and bloody hundred-day battle in the dead of winter that placed 800,000 Hungarian civilians in the cross-fire. According to Ungvary’s *The Siege of Budapest*, food supplies quickly ran out. People scavenged for food in heaps of garbage, fed off dead cavalry horses, or hunted exotic animals that had escaped from the bombarded Budapest Zoo.

Those civilians who didn’t die of hunger, cold, or disease perished in military actions or through anti-Semitic violence. Hundreds of Jews were publically executed — often in broad daylight — by everyday Hungarians. Men, women, children, and even priests took part. At one point senior Nazis advised Hungarian officials to rein them in, fearing a public backlash. By the time Budapest fell to the Russians on February 13, 1945, more than 150,000 people were



Top: Hungarian leader Miklós Horthy with Nazi leader Adolf Hitler in 1938.



Left: Urban warfare during the Siege of Budapest in 1945.

dead, including 38,000 Hungarian civilians.

In the middle of this maelstrom went Feyer and his family.

Feyer never wrote about the siege and rarely discussed it with friends or family, but its effects were undeniable. On a tour of Hungary he and Berton took in the 1960s Feyer confided that “the Hungarians were worse to the Jews than anybody, including the Nazis.” Later, when Berton asked him why he hadn’t written about his wartime experiences, Feyer “simply said [to Berton] ... that they were so unbelievable nobody would believe them.”

According to George Jonas, a fellow Hungarian who was friendly with Feyer, the cartoonist “had demons of all kinds. If you talked with him for five minutes, you’d know he was a guy who had a dark side.”

After the war, Feyer stayed in now Soviet-occupied Hungary, making ends meet with his forgery business and the occasional freelance job. In 1946, when the Communists began to clamp down on the black market, Feyer packed up his gear, walked to Vienna,

and surrendered to British forces. He briefly lived in a displaced persons camp before leaving and settling in Munich, West Germany, where he took to cartooning again full-time. Soon his mother joined him, and the pair resolved to emigrate to the West. His father remained in Hungary.

“Coming to America is the dream of almost all immigrants, and that was my dream too,” Feyer told CBC-TV in 1964. “Capitalism always appealed to me.”

But his initial attempts to gain entry to the United States were unsuccessful, he claimed, because of anti-Semitism. Though the border was not protected by guns or “towers with search lights,” he said, “it’s strong enough to exclude ninety per cent of the human race: mainly those who don’t match the colour scheme.”

Turned back by the U.S., Feyer and his mother applied to Canada. She was accepted right away. It took George, now twenty-seven, five attempts, in part because officials considered his leg injury a

disability. He finally won entry — as he would many times during his life — by the well-timed execution of his expertly engineered wit. On his fifth attempt he covered his immigration application with cartoons of himself drawn as a strapping lumberjack, chopping wood and generally being a productive member of Canadian society. The immigration officers were amused and approved his application.

Knowing only a few words of English, Feyer arrived in Toronto in 1948, got an eighteen-dollar-a-week job in a quilt factory, and moved into an attic on Spadina Road. When he wasn't stuffing duck feathers into quilts, he was drawing comics and cartoons.

In 1949 he sold his first comic, a simple gag about a man visiting his optometrist, to *Maclean's*. But the real joke was squirrelled away in the back-ground, where he had hidden a series of Hungarian profanities in the optometrist's chart — a dirty and sly in-joke for his fellow countrymen. The sale, the first of many to come with the magazine, was a godsend. "I came to life again," Feyer said.

Over the next few years Feyer published scores of cartoons, many of which were syndicated internationally. His style blossomed, evolving from a static line to his signature loose "cartoony" style, seemingly influenced by visually innovative European cartoonists such as Saul Steinberg, André François, and Maurice Sinet, known as Siné.

Cartoonist Terry Mosher — who works under the pen name Aislin — remembers Feyer's work in *Maclean's*, which he read growing up in Montreal during the 1950s. "They were certainly a lot more interesting than the bland cartooning that was appearing elsewhere."

"There's a lot of good competent cartoonists who give you a laugh sometimes, though not all of the time. But there are those people who stand out, and George is one of them," said Mosher. "In terms

of my own personal ranking, he's right up there in the upper echelon. If you're thinking of the original six teams in the NHL, he's one of them."

Seth — the pen name of award-winning Guelph, Ontario, cartoonist Gregory Gallant — discovered Feyer's work by accident twenty years ago while flipping through a collection of international gag comics.

"As a Canadian, your first response when you see anything from Canada is that you just hope it's not embarrassing,"

allowed a little more freedom, they would have been dirtier, too."

By 1951 Feyer was making enough money with comics to quit his job and move into a bigger, better apartment and rent a nearby apartment for his mother. That summer he met Michaela Fitzsimons, an art student who was home on a study break. George spotted her at a party north of Toronto and pursued her with his signature devotion. For two weeks he called her precisely at 11:30 every night and played romantic

records over the receiver. On the last night, when Fitzsimons picked up the phone, Feyer said, "How do you like my music?" They were engaged four days later.

It was around this time that Feyer met the man who would be the second-most-important relationship in his life.

The writer Pierre Berton had moved to Toronto a year before Feyer and within a couple of years had ascended to managing editor of *Maclean's*, which is where he was introduced to Feyer and his work. Though they seemed an unlikely pair on the surface — Berton was more than six feet tall with a trademark sonorous voice; Feyer was five feet, six inches and congenitally soft-spoken — the duo actually had a lot in common. Born just seven months apart, both served in Europe during the war, each harboured strong anti-establishment leanings, and both appreciated the unique alchemy of words and images called comics.

Though Berton is best known as an author and TV

personality, he grew up a diehard fan of comic strips and editorial cartooning and originally aspired to a life behind the drawing board. He even tried his hand at cartooning in student papers at university in the 1930s, to little success.

"Berton was a frustrated cartoonist, as a lot of people are, like Margaret Atwood," Mosher said. "But," he joked, "they couldn't make it, so they moved on to lesser things."

Though Berton switched to journalism



Pierre Berton at *Maclean's*, circa 1950s.

Pierre Berton praised Feyer as "the most inventive man I have known," adding that "ideas crackled from George in meteoric showers."

he said. "So it was nice to see that he was — to use a horrible phrase — a world-class cartoonist. George was doing a much more sophisticated kind of cartooning than anybody in Canada. ... And I was kind of disappointed that I had no idea who he was."

What makes Feyer's comics stand out, in Gallant's eyes, is that "every cartoon by Feyer features mischievous characters. And he doesn't do sweet; his characters were always manic, and I think if he had been

after graduation, his passion for comics remained. In the 1940s, as an editor at the *Vancouver Sun*, he gave cartoonist Len Norris his start, and later he helped launch the careers of Canadian cartooning giants Duncan Macpherson and Sid Barron. “Pierre Berton should be remembered as a patron saint of the golden age of Canadian cartooning,” said Mosher.

Pretty soon Berton was introducing Feyer to his associates in Toronto, which included Marshall McLuhan, June Callwood, Peter Munk (a fellow Hungarian émigré), Norman Jewison, CBC Radio’s Allan McFee and Lister Sinclair, among others.

“He chewed it up,” said Mosher. “He moved through Toronto’s establishment like a strong wind. It was phenomenal. He thoroughly enjoyed the fame in Toronto, there’s no question about that. These big magazine articles were written about him, and the cream of Toronto society was fawning over him.”

As a member of Toronto’s cultural elite, Feyer found himself discussing media theory with McLuhan, boyishly flirting with Callwood, and carousing with Berton, all of whom were engrossed by Feyer’s ribald wit and iconoclastic attitudes towards politics, religion, and sex.

“He would ask girls to lend him their belly buttons, and he would draw — using their belly button as the focal point — all kinds of highly amusing and very clever cartoons,” Jonas recalls. “It became a bit of a distinction to have a Feyer cartoon tattooed on your belly.”

He drew faces on Berton’s bald pate, a leering man peeking out of the top of Callwood’s dress, and a trapeze artist swinging from a necklace just above his fiancée Fitzsimons’ looming cleavage.

During Feyer’s trips north to the Berton family home in Kleinburg, Ontario, Peter Berton — one of Pierre’s sons — remembers him drawing on everything, from walls and light switches to kids and animals. “I remember he drew a lion tamer on my walls,” said Berton. Feyer also defaced a neighbour’s white Persian cat who was innocently relaxing in the Berton’s living room.

When he was finished, “Fluffy” had a beret, moustache, bow tie, dinner jacket, and red-striped socks.

As his reputation spread, CBC took notice and recruited Feyer’s lightning-fast skills for the then-infant medium of live

television. In 1953 he made his TV debut on the children’s show *Telestory Time*, where he donned a corny beret and artist’s smock to illustrate a story read by cheery host Pat Patterson. His success on the biweekly show led to other gigs on kiddie shows like *Razzle Dazzle* and *Pick-A-Letter*, both of which ran in syndication well into the 1970s.

A segment from *Razzle Dazzle* provides a quintessential example of Feyer’s commanding talents. As Feyer stands by, a boy draws a loopy squiggle on a blank piece of

when to smile.” According to his son, Tony Feyer, “He didn’t really like the kid’s stuff, but it paid the bills. He loathed doing it.”

In time he parlayed his talent into more adult fare, performing on *The Joan Fairfax Show*, *The Midnight Club* (hosted by Pierre Berton), and *The Wayne and Shuster Show*. In 1955, he began a high-profile gig on *Hockey Night in Canada*, drawing cartoons to go along with the post-game commentary. Later he landed a spot on *The Steve Allen Show* and was hired by marketing



George Feyer draws a cartoon on a woman’s back, date unknown.

paper. The cartoonist turns the paper on its end and in less than thirty seconds transforms the boy’s scribble into a defeated-looking barfly perched in front of a pint of beer. He adds a straw to the barfly’s glass and, taking it all in for a second, says to the boy, “Man drinking milkshake.”

It was ingenious and slightly subversive, not unlike his work during the war, and it helped vault him into the public eye.

“Feyer belongs to that generation of performing cartoonists like Al Capp and Ben Wicks,” said Jeet Heer, a cultural historian and writer about comics. “They were part of the entertainment industry.”

But while many fondly remember his work from this period, Feyer came to resent it. “I am not a funny little man,” he told *Maclean’s* in 1960. “I am sad and serious. I am so serious that when I am on TV they have to get a stagehand to poke me in the back with a broom to remind me

agencies to do commercials for Esso Oil and other clients.

His act became so popular that he registered a patent for his innovative Mobiline process, which involved drawing on a special translucent paper, in reverse from behind. To TV viewers it gave the illusion that his cartoons were drawing themselves.

In 1955, bolstered by his newfound success, he convinced Fitzsimons’ parents to let the pair tie the knot, which they did on July 1 in a hotel in New York City. They moved into a house in Toronto’s Rosedale neighbourhood, which they promptly filled with antiques picked up during their summer holidays in Europe.

Over the years Feyer kept experimenting with new platforms for his panoramic talent. In February 1956 he branched out into fashion, collaborating with a Toronto designer on an outfit that featured his Mexican-themed drawings. In June 1959 he

performed an illustrated history of the St. Lawrence Seaway on a twenty-three-metre-square projection screen on Toronto's Front Street as part of the waterway's opening ceremonies — Queen Elizabeth watched a live broadcast of this in Montreal. In 1963 he performed at a Liberal candidate debate; a year later he and his marker played the part of the Cheshire Cat in a “jazz-opera” version of *Alice in Wonderland*.

On May 30, 1959, his wife gave birth to their first and only child, Tony. A joyous Feyer told *Maclean's* that he planned to “bring him up as a vulgar millionaire.”

By the 1960s Feyer had become something unprecedented within Canada: a celebrity cartoonist, with fans who would frequently interrupt his walks with his dog, Molly, to offer him ideas for his next cartoon. A ropy-haired Hungarian puli, Molly became something of a child and confidant for Feyer during the last decade of his life. “He was so incredibly devoted to that dog,” Tony Feyer said. “I think he probably preferred the company of an animal to a human being at times.”

By the late 1950s, Feyer was growing weary of what he considered editorial interference with his work. He told Berton in 1959 that all of his favourite work was being rejected “in favour of cartoons which he drew under duress but hated for their banality.”

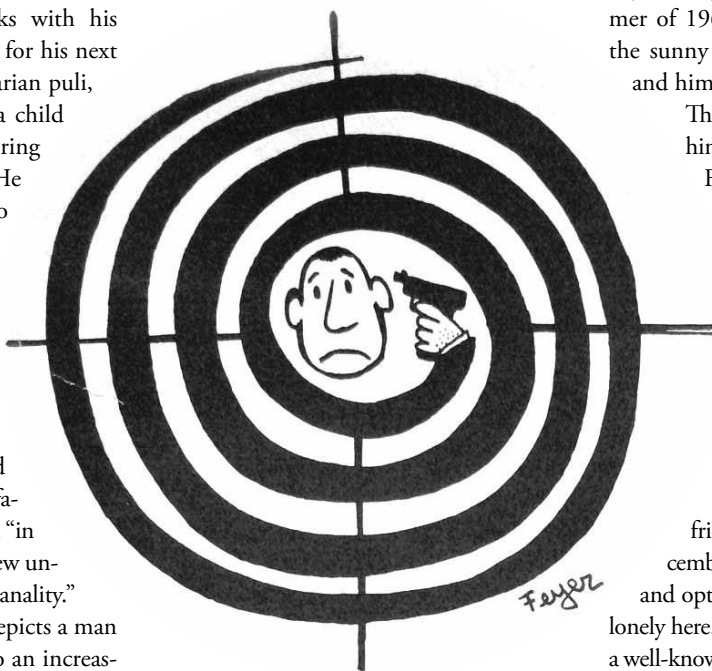
One of his 1952 cartoons depicts a man pitching a series of cartoons to an increasingly amused editor. In the final panel the editor stops laughing, hands the portfolio back to the cartoonist, and sends him on his way. The message couldn't have been clearer: Feyer's cartoons were insightful and hilarious — but the reserved readership simply wasn't ready for them.

“Feyer had a sense of humour which a number of people found weird,” said Jonas. “I frankly didn't; I found it a kind of central European gallows humour. He was an immensely talented guy, but he hated prudishness and small-mindedness. He helped loosen up the kind of uptightness that was characteristic of Toronto and Canada in the 1950s. That period was very uptight, and George was one of the people who helped liberate it. He produced the sixties more than the sixties produced him.”

According to Mosher and Berton, more than half of Feyer's best work never saw print. This included two proto-graphic novels: *My Son the God*, a wickedly funny take on the Second Coming, and another devoted to suicide, which is sadly lost to time.

Mosher sympathizes with Feyer's frustrations with editors. “Listen, we're dealing with people who haven't got the vaguest ideas of what it is we do, or how we do it — they just know that it's popular. And what really pisses them off is [that] we're probably more popular than they are.”

By the early 1960s Feyer had reached a personal and professional turning point.



Estranged from his wife (who was addicted to barbiturates and amphetamines) he was becoming increasingly disillusioned with his career in Canada. According to Berton, Feyer felt that he was being taken for granted in Canada, with many clients either stalling him on jobs or not paying at all.

One example of this was the TV show *Pick-A-Letter*, which saw Feyer draw stories based on a letter of the alphabet. Produced by Screen Gems between 1962 and 1963, the short segments were widely syndicated in Canada and the U.S. and proved so popular that they survived in reruns for nearly two decades. The show was clearly founded on Feyer's singular talent and could not have existed without him, yet friends say the royalties he was promised were never paid out.

“George was a great talent who I don't think ever got his due,” said Franklin, “and what bothered people so much was that he never made a penny from that show. *Pick-A-Letter* was so good, and he never made a penny for it.”

With his work either being exploited on TV or lobotomized in print, Feyer decided to take his substantial talents south to Los Angeles, joining an exodus of Canadian talent that had left the country in search of new work and fresh success. This brain drain included actor Lorne Greene, author Arthur Hailey, and director Norman Jewison, all of whom preceded Feyer and all of whom had been embraced by Hollywood. Feyer escaped to California in the summer of 1965 and rented an apartment in the sunny heart of Hollywood for Molly and himself.

The *Globe and Mail* caught up with him in September and depicted Feyer as an in-demand talent; he had taped a segment on *The Danny Kaye Show* alongside Clint Eastwood and Buddy Ebsen and had just booked \$21,000 in commercial work. A few months later he was taping TV specials with comedian Mort Sahl and musician Roger Miller.

In a letter to his childhood friend Hansi Forgash dated December 29, 1965, Feyer sounds busy and optimistic, but isolated. “I'm terribly lonely here. I have the Carpenters [Edmund, a well-known anthropologist] and sometimes Barry [Morse] for friends. But mostly Molly.”

A year later, on December 17, 1966, *Maclean's* ran a two-page feature on Feyer's new life. “Like most Canadian brain drainers his feelings are mixed,” it noted. “His income has doubled, but he finds the city ‘superficial, heartless and insane.’”

Another letter written to Forgash a few weeks later shines a harsher, more honest light on his Hollywood existence: “Thanks for the news clippings. I hope you didn't believe a word of it because all that horse shit was of course Hollywoodese propaganda for myself. The truth is between you and me that life is hard, although hopeful. I miss Tony and worry about Michaela. ... I can't imagine what would happen to her and Tony if I would be hit by a truck or kicked by a canary (ouch!). It's beautiful

here if you deduct the people. They are full of horse shit up to their ears.” (The word “horse shit” was deployed using a rubber stamp he had devised, with the words appearing in large Gothic script.)

That was the last anybody heard from him. Less than three months later Feyer was found dead in his apartment of an apparently self-inflicted gunshot wound. Edmund Carpenter, who discovered his body on March 31, 1967, initially told the *Toronto Star* that his friend had killed himself several months after learning he had a brain tumour. Yet Feyer made no mention of the tumour in his letter to his old friend Forgash just a couple of months prior. Adding to the confusion, years later Carpenter took back this detail in a conversation with Tony Feyer, for whom he had become a stand-in father figure.

Feyer’s death devastated his friends and family. A wan-looking Lister Sinclair appeared on CBC-TV the following week to eulogize Feyer, his shaky voice devoid of its usual erudition. “George was a kind, sweet, depressed man most of his life [who] thought of life as a four-letter word,” Sinclair said.

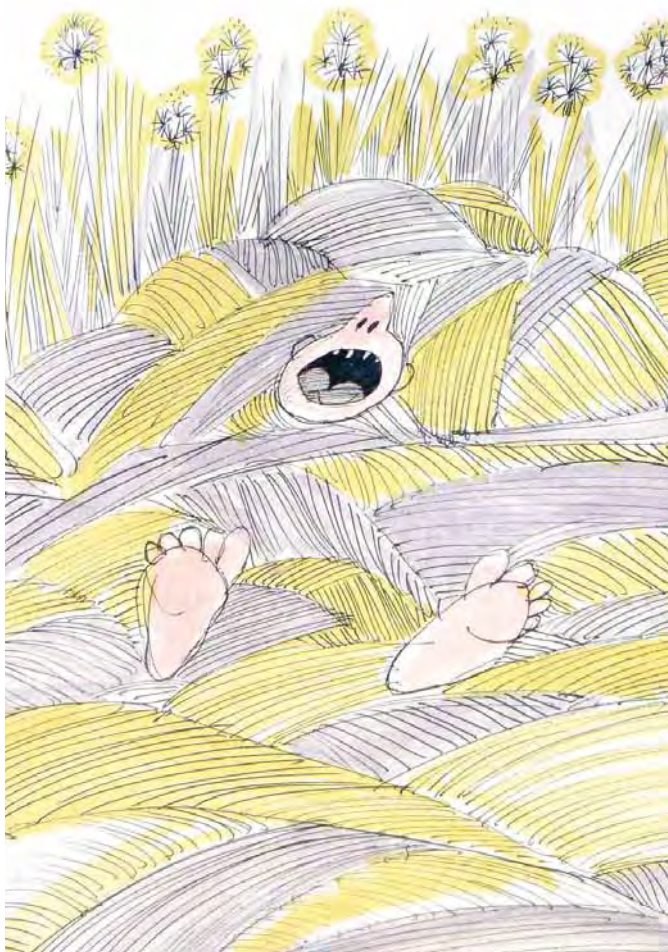
Peirre Berton was “very hard hit” by his friend’s death, said Berton’s son. But he wasn’t particularly surprised, since Feyer had exhibited suicidal tendencies throughout his life.

In fact, Feyer’s work is littered with references to suicide. There were cartoons of men hanging themselves, cutting off their heads, overdosing on pills, and with guns pointed at their heads. In his first apartment in Toronto he drew a priest and mourners on the wall overlooking his bed, as if he was a confined corpse while sleeping.

As the shock waves abated, the rumours began to circle — about money problems, mental illness, alcohol and substance abuse. Fifty years later, question marks continue to hover. Berton’s eulogy in the *Star* mentions Feyer’s Hollywood apartment being covered with his cartoons: “Drawings on

the walls and the ceiling, drawings on the radiators and the bathroom tile, drawings on the very door handles, drawings stuffed into closets, piled against the bed, stacked in piles on the floor, unfinished on his desk and [drawing] board.” However, Tony Feyer, who spent a summer with his father in Los Angeles, disputes this account, insisting that Feyer always kept an immaculate studio.

In his public encomium in the *Star* Ber-



ton recalled that while visiting Hungary with Feyer in 1963, for a week-long series called “Berton Behind the Curtain,” Feyer “invariably asked gypsy musicians [whom he hated] to play ‘Gloomy Sunday,’ the very song he had mocked decades earlier.

Sinclair all but diagnosed his friend with post-traumatic stress disorder: “The war was very bitter to him. I remember he told me that he would wake at night dreaming of the piles of corpses.”

And, there was a previously unreported incident that occurred in January 1967, just three months before his death, as told by his son. “He went to this meeting in

L.A., and he left his dog [Molly] in the car,” Tony recalls. “He was only supposed to be in the meeting for a brief period of time, so he parked the car in the shade with the window open a crack. But he got stuck in this meeting much longer than he anticipated, and the angle of the sun changed, and unfortunately it baked the car, and the dog ended up dying of hyperthermia in the car. It wasn’t long after that that he offed himself.”

In a letter Carpenter wrote to Berton dated April 11, 1967, the anthropologist added a further layer to the mystery: “When I first talked to you immediately following George’s death, I spoke of his depression, the inevitability of it all, etc. I later found out that this was only part of the picture. Toward the end he was fighting with everything in him, working furiously, developing new styles, moving into new fields, etc. The correspondence he left behind — carbons of letters to agencies — indicate that he was determined to make it no matter what the obstacles. Some of these letters were written the day of his death. And there was much else — recent dental bills, library books checked out, etc. — that suggest that both the life and death wishes were very strong toward the end.”

Of course, we can never be sure of the cause of Feyer’s tragic end. The Los Angeles

coroner’s office didn’t conduct an autopsy, and by the time Michaela Feyer and their son Tony arrived in Hollywood his body had been cremated. Like every suicide, the question marks that are inevitably drawn can never be erased.

“It was the way he chose to go,” Berton wrote in a eulogy in the *Toronto Star* a week after Feyer’s death. “And we who were his friends, can have no quarrel with it. We can only mourn the waste.”

In the end, maybe the genius with the felt-tipped marker simply ran out of canvas. 🖍️

See more of Feyer’s cartoons at CanadasHistory.ca/Feyer



Dutch people celebrate the liberation of Utrecht, Netherlands, by units of the 1st Canadian Corps, May 7, 1945.



LASTING LIBERATION



The unrestrained joy that erupted in the Netherlands when Canadian troops liberated the country seventy years ago continues to be felt today.

by Nelle Oosterom

Every year in early May, the capital city of Canada bursts into a joyous blaze of colour as hundreds of thousands of tulips go into bloom. The event is more than just an annual rite of spring; it is a reminder of Canada's role in helping the Netherlands during the Second World War.

This May marks seventy years since the 1945 Netherlands *bevrijding* — that country's liberation from five years of brutal Nazi occupation. The memory of Canada's part in freeing the country remains strong among the Dutch. And for good reason. As in much of Europe, the war was a time of great suffering. Most of the Jewish population was wiped out. Resistance efforts were brutally crushed. Men were forcibly sent to Germany to work in factories, many never to return. Much of the country's resources went to Germany, resulting in shortages of food, fuel, clothing, and other basic goods, culminating in the *hongerwinter* (hunger winter) of 1944–45, during which twenty thousand people starved to death. And, as in most of Europe, it took a long time for the Netherlands to rebuild after the war was over.

My parents were young adults in the Netherlands during the occupation. After the war, they were part of a large wave of Dutch people who immigrated to Canada to seek a better life. But like many of their generation, the weight of the *oorlog* (war) never completely left them.

For five terrifying days, my father helped defend an airport against German attack. A round of strafing fire came so close it shot off the tip of his boot.

In the spring of 1940, after months of fading hope that its declaration of neutrality would shield it from Nazi leader Adolf Hitler's designs, the Netherlands, along with France, Belgium, and Luxembourg, was suddenly invaded on May 10. As a country that had not engaged in war for more than a century—it stayed neutral during the First World War—the Netherlands was ill-equipped to stand against the blitzkrieg.

My father Hendrik Oosterom's part of that story comes across in a photo of him standing tall in his Dutch army uniform—a simple outfit with no insignia, a cloth side cap, and knee-length puttees. A twenty-two-year-old bricklayer, Dad was called up to serve in the months leading up to the invasion. After training with obsolete

equipment, he served on an anti-aircraft artillery crew. For five terrifying days, he helped defend an airport against German attack. A round of strafing fire came so close it shot off the tip of his boot and killed a comrade standing next to him. In another incident, a bomb went off close by, making him temporarily deaf. As a result, my father was hard of hearing for the rest of his life.

As defenders like my father fought a losing battle, German paratroopers landed at the royal palace in The Hague, intending to capture Dutch Queen Wilhelmina. This wasn't to be, however, for the royal family escaped in time to make a dangerous crossing of the English Channel on British warships. The Dutch government also went into exile in London. But with Britain itself under siege, arrangements were soon made to bring Dutch crown Princess Juliana and her two young children to greater safety in Ottawa. Their war-time stay would have a lasting impact on Canada's relationship with the Netherlands.

For ordinary people like fourteen-year-old Olga Trestorff, a banker's daughter from Haarlem, North Holland, there was no safe place to go. "When the Nazis overran our small country I did not realize what the next five years were going to be like," she wrote later. "I learned the realities of life as I watched hardness and cruelty with my own eyes."

It took five days of fighting—and the bombing deaths of thousands of civilians in Rotterdam—for the Netherlands to surrender. Eager to facilitate a smooth entry of his Dutch "cousins" into his Aryan empire, Hitler ordered the occupying soldiers to be friendly and helpful. My mother, Willemijntje Van Voorst, who was nineteen during the invasion, recalled that the German soldiers she encountered initially did not seem threatening. Instead of being made prisoners of war, Dutch soldiers like my father were sent home to their families in what Hitler called a gesture of goodwill.

There was some relief that everyday life did not immediately change. And, for a minority of Dutch fascists, the occupation was welcome. Membership in the National Socialist Movement of the Netherlands grew to about 100,000 during the war, with its members often playing key roles in local government and the civil service that helped the Nazis carry out their aims.

The imposition of Nazism and its goal of racial purity came about slowly, in increments. Initially, the Jewish population of about 140,000 came and went freely. But, as the months and years passed, the Jews lost their jobs, their businesses, their right to property, their freedom of movement, and finally their lives. Refugees from Germany who had been through it all before in the 1930s were not fooled. Immediately after the surrender on May 15, 1940,



An artist's conception of German troops crossing a river during the invasion of the Netherlands in 1940. The Dutch destroyed many bridges to try to stop the advancing German army.

Rotterdam's centre in ruins
after the city was bombed
by the Luftwaffe on
May 14, 1940.

an estimated two hundred Jews in the Netherlands committed suicide. By the end of the war, three quarters of the Jewish population had perished, most of them in death camps.

Anne Frank, a Jewish girl who left behind a diary that was later made famous, became the face of what happened to many Jewish people at that time. Like thousands of Jews throughout Holland, her family went into hiding. They were sheltered in a secret annex above a business in Amsterdam. The family was eventually betrayed and sent to concentration camps abroad, where only her father, Otto Frank, survived.

In a diary entry written July 15, 1944, a few weeks before her family was captured, the fifteen-year-old Anne Frank wrote a now familiar passage that has lived on as message of courage and hope: "I hear the approaching thunder that, one day, will destroy us too. I feel the suffering of millions. And yet, when I look up at the sky, I somehow feel that everything will change for the better, that this cruelty too shall end, that peace and tranquility will return once more."

Even for non-Jews like my parents, the occupation was an experience of increasing hardship and danger that affected every area of life. Everything was in short supply, even rubber for the tires of their bicycles, which were their sole means of transportation. They pedalled long distances on bicycle wheels that had their steel rims covered with wood. With fabric in short supply, my mother and her sisters turned old curtains into dresses.

Food was rationed, with portions reduced as the occupation dragged on and more and more food was sent to Germany. At the Van Voorst dairy farm just outside the village of Kockengen near the city of Utrecht, creative ways were found to keep food out of German hands. My mother got up at three in the morning so that the cows could be milked twice. The first batch was hidden away. The second batch went to the occupation authorities, who were made to believe the cows were less productive than average. Meanwhile, milk from the first batch was made available to hungry people from the cities who walked or cycled long distances in the darkness of early morning to line up for whatever was available. Often the milk would run out before everyone could be served. In one case, a pregnant woman collapsed and ended up giving birth in the barn. "It was *zielig* (pitiful)," my mother recalled.



Hendrik Oosterom, in his Dutch army uniform in 1940, and his fiancée, Willemijntje Van Voorst, whose family hid him later in the war.

Men like my father also faced the ever-present threat of being sent to Germany for forced labour in munitions factories. Fortunately, his job as a canal builder — which was considered essential work — allowed him to remain in the country. But his situation became more precarious in 1943 when former Dutch soldiers were ordered to turn themselves in as prisoners of war. Dad eventually abandoned his job in 1944 when the Allies started bombing strategic areas, such as the canals he worked on. Luckily for him, he was engaged to



A boy in Amsterdam during the hunger winter of 1944–45.

Willemijntje Van Voorst (my mother) by this time. He spent the last year of the war hiding on the Van Voorst farm, where several other people were also being concealed.

With time, resistance to the occupation stiffened. The underground developed expertise in forging identity papers and over the course of the war helped put more than 300,000 people in hiding, including many Jewish children who were absorbed into non-Jewish families. Later in the war, the resistance engaged in more acts of sabotage, which Nazi authorities punished harshly. Innocent people were often executed in the street. For my father, one of the most terrifying events of the war came when he was stopped by German soldiers

on a road blocked by a fallen tree. In front of him was the body of a man who had just been shot as a suspected saboteur. A pistol was put to my father's head as a soldier angrily yelled at him in German. My father, who did not understand German, was certain that his life was over. Just then a member of the Dutch SS stepped in, and, after speaking with my father in his own language, decided he was not a threat. Dad was let go after helping to move the tree out of the way.

With newspapers and other communication under Nazi censorship and control, the only way to find out what was going on was through underground newspapers or by radio. Listening to the radio was punishable by imprisonment or even death, but most families had a radio hidden away so that they could listen to Radio Oranje, a resistance channel broadcast from England. It was through Radio Oranje that the Dutch received some morale-boosting news from Canada in January 1943: Princess Juliana had given birth to a baby girl in Ottawa.

For many, the birth of Princess Margriet was the happiest news they had heard in years. While urged not to demonstrate publicly, because that would incite Nazi reprisals, some wore bits of royal-coloured orange fabric to mark the occasion. "For us, 1943 is the year of our rising hope," F.E.H. Groenman, the Dutch minister to Canada, declared at a reception at his home in Ottawa. The princess was named after the marguerite flower, which Queen Wilhelmina had selected as a symbol of resistance. In Ottawa, the Dutch flag flew from the top of the Peace Tower to mark her birth, and the country's national anthem was played on the tower's bells.

But the reality was that the royal birth presented a sticky situation diplomatically. It would not have been acceptable to have a Dutch princess born on Canadian soil as a Canadian citizen. The matter even came up in a conversation between American President Franklin Roosevelt (whose ancestors were Dutch) and Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King. "He asked me if I had been able to arrange the matter about Juliana's infant being born on Dutch soil," King wrote in his diary in November of 1942. "I told him it was a curious sort of job for me but I had been able to arrange the matter under an Order in Council under the War Measures Act. He said he was delighted to know that. He added, 'I am to be a godfather and you must see it through.'"

In the end, the young princess was born in a hospital room the Canadian government had declared extraterritorial. This ensured that the newborn would be born a full Dutch citizen and be in the line of succession.

By the late summer of 1944, with Allied forces in northwest Europe liberating France and most of Belgium, hopes rose within the Netherlands that their country would soon be free. British forces airdropped weapons into the country at night for use by the Dutch resistance. The weapons had to be surreptitiously collected and hidden — my mother recalled how a woman she knew coolly sauntered past German soldiers pushing a baby carriage filled with rifles.

The British capture of the Belgian port of Antwerp on September 4 fuelled rumours that the Netherlands would be next. What followed on September 5 was one of the strangest incidents of the war. In a day that became known as "Dolle Dinsdag" (Mad Tuesday), people went dizzy with euphoria, pouring out into the streets to dance and celebrate because they believed liberation was immi-



Canadian troops in Nijmegen, Netherlands, December 5, 1944.

ment. Indeed, many German occupiers and collaborators believed it, too. Some of the latter went into a panic, destroying documents and fleeing into Germany.

Sadly for the Dutch, the Allied advance ground to a halt with the failure of Operation Market Garden, an ambitious but flawed plan carried out from September 17 to 25 that called for the Allies to cross the Rhine River and trap German forces. The operation's collapse meant that most of the Netherlands had to endure another eight months of Nazi oppression. Acts of resistance became bolder. In one instance, Dutch resistance members ambushed a car near the village of Putten on September 30, killing a German officer. In retaliation, a German force raided the village the next day, burning most of the homes, executing seven people immediately, and sending the male population of more than six hundred to forced labour camps, where most died.

The failure of Operation Market Garden left the Allies spent and the Germans able to regroup. It was left to the Canadian First Army to secure the estuary approaching Antwerp so that the port could function free of German interference — an operation known as the Battle of the Scheldt.

The Battle of the Scheldt from October 1 to November 8, 1944, was a tough slog in mostly Dutch territory that earned the Canadians who participated the nickname “water rats,” since they were often in miserably wet conditions. Under-strength, with many inexperienced troops, the Canadians first had to cross the Leopold

Canal in canvas boats under heavy fire, then move across land that had been flooded by the Germans. “I always remember it being wet, always cold,” said Jim Parks of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, as quoted in *Canada and the Liberation of the Netherlands* (2005) by Lance Goddard. “Digging the mortars out of the mud all the time, and we had quite a number of casualties. They [the Germans] had their nests set up pretty good...”

The Canadians succeeded in opening up the port of Antwerp so that Allied supply ships could begin arriving. But the effort came at a cost of more than 12,000 casualties, of whom 6,367 were Canadians. Part of the southern Netherlands was now held by the Allies, and civilians there were able to receive badly needed provisions. But, with the Allied advance stalled due to weather and the need for rest and reinforcements, the rest of the country braced to face the cruellest winter of its history.

My parents, who did not marry until after the war, were fortunate in that my mother's family's farm produced food that kept them alive. People living in cities suffered the most. Store shelves were empty, electricity and heating supplies were cut off, and even tap water was rationed.

“In order to keep alive, people traded whatever they had — swapping pianos for fifty pounds of potatoes,” said Olga Trestorff. “My parents burned their Queen Anne furniture to keep warm.” Trestorff and her mother travelled long distances to farms in search of food. They returned balancing heavy bags of beets and turnips on their

Spring in Arnhem, Holland
1945 by Captain George
Campbell Tinning.





Olga and Lloyd Rains on their wedding day, December 24, 1945. Olga was one of about 2,000 Dutch war brides.

Trestorff sewed her wedding dress out of material salvaged from a parachute that had been used to drop food on Holland's starving population.

bicycles as they were lashed by wind and cold. "I often wished I would die," she said.

As the Canadian First Army held the line at the Maas River and Nijmegen Salient and prepared to liberate the rest of Holland in the spring, American and British troops battled against a surprise German counteroffensive aimed at retaking Antwerp. The Battle of the Bulge raged from December 16 to January 25, 1945, in the Ardennes forest region of Belgium, France, and Luxembourg. The Americans suffered huge numbers of casualties, but the Allies succeeded in driving the Germans back. With the forces of Germany depleted and the Soviet army advancing from the east, the situation was hopeless for the Germans; yet there would be no early surrender. Hitler was determined to keep on fighting, and his occupying force in Holland stubbornly dug in to throw back the Allied liberators.

Over the winter, badly needed reinforcements came in to shore up the Canadian First Army. Some were newly arrived from Canada. Others were battle-hardened soldiers in 1 Canadian Corps who came up from the south, fresh from victory in the long-running Italian campaign. Among the latter were Private Lloyd Rains and his best friend, Private Jack Purvis, of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI). The nineteen-year-olds had by then experienced more trauma than most people experience in a lifetime. They had seen many of their comrades fall around them on the bloody

battlefields of Italy. Now they were tantalizingly close to finally going home. There was just one more major battle to go.

The PPCLI arrived in northwest Europe in late March to join the Canadian First Army, which had just finished participating in the successful but costly Rhineland Campaign that, for the first time, had the German army fighting on its own soil. The final phase of the war in northwest Europe would see the Americans and the British advancing across Germany while the Canadians pushed west to liberate the rest of the Netherlands.

On April 11, Rains and Purvis joined the rest of their regiment in preparing to cross the IJssel River into occupied territory. But something went terribly wrong. There was a deafening explosion — Purvis had stepped on a land mine. Rains helplessly watched his closest friend die of shrapnel wounds in the closing days of the war. Purvis became one of 7,600 Canadian soldiers who died during the campaign to liberate the Netherlands.

As the Canadians advanced into the western Netherlands, they met pockets of fierce resistance; but opposition gradually melted away. As they entered towns the Germans had abandoned, hungry civilians mustered all their energy to greet them. The area where my parents lived near Utrecht was among the last to be liberated. What stood out for my mother during liberation was how people danced in the streets — this was not something that the normally reserved Dutch were prone to do. She often said it was the happiest time of her life.

The entire country went into a frenzy of celebration that went on for months. The Canadians, as well as soldiers of other nationalities who were under the command of the Canadian First Army, were showered with affection. Among those whose spirits were lifted by the euphoric welcome and the prospect of peacetime was Private Lloyd Rains. On June 2, he was standing outside a dance hall in the village of Bloemendaal near Haarlem when he saw a pretty young woman go by on her bicycle. It was Olga Trestorff.

"He came over and he said, 'Can I ride your bike?'" said Trestorff. "And I said, 'Well, yeah, if you like to, but I want something. Do you have chocolate?' and he said, 'Oh yeah, how much chocolate do you want?' ... I hadn't seen chocolate for four years."

Within a month, Rains and Trestorff were engaged. Rains received permission to extend his stay in Holland; and Trestorff went to work sewing her wedding dress out of material salvaged from a parachute that had been used to drop food on Holland's starving population during the final days of the war. The pair married on Christmas Eve 1945. Rains returned home, and his wife followed eight months later as one of the two thousand Dutch war brides who came to Canada. There the couple would raise a family and eventually embark on an extraordinary project linked to the liberation.

The project began in 1980, when Lloyd Rains and other veterans were invited to the Netherlands to mark the thirty-fifth anniversary of the liberation of Amsterdam. During a parade, Olga Rains noticed people approaching the vets carrying old photos. "I asked

them, “What are you doing bothering all these vets?” she said. “They said, ‘We’re looking for our fathers.’”

The demonstrators, all thirty-four years old, claimed they were the children of Canadian soldiers who had impregnated Dutch women during their time in the Netherlands. Numbering about four thousand, they had grown up rootless. Many suffered the stigma of rejection for being born outside of wedlock. Their situation prompted Olga Rains to form Project Roots, an ambitious effort to help the *bevrijdingskinderen* — the liberation children. For three decades she and her husband helped the grown children track down the fathers who left them behind.

Some vets resented their work, and Lloyd Rains was reluctant to get involved at first. “I thought I’m not going to do that, I’m not going to bug my former comrades over anything they did in the war,” he said in an interview in 2005. “But when I met these children I just couldn’t refuse to help them.”

Lloyd Rains died in 2013 at the age of eighty-eight. After Olga passes away, the couple’s ashes will be spread at Holten Canadian War Cemetery in the Netherlands, where 1,300 of Lloyd’s comrades, including his old friend Jack Purvis, are buried.

As for my parents, they are buried in Canada. Difficult postwar

conditions in the Netherlands prompted them to move here with my three siblings in 1952 (I was born a few years later.) And, even though my father was a tradesman, my mother insisted our family live on a farm. This was to ensure there would always be food — in case there was another war.

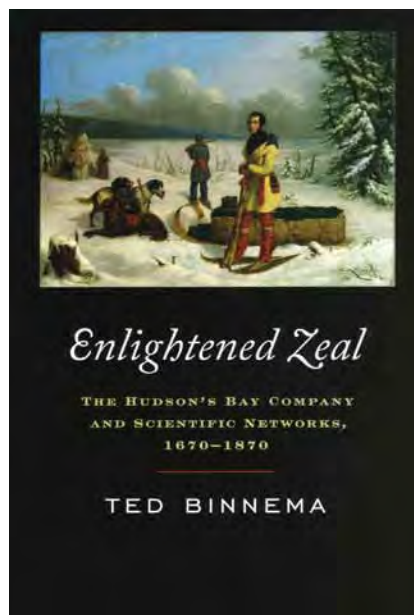
In the Netherlands, the memory of the liberation remains strong. Schoolchildren still tend the gravesites of Canadians who died fighting in their country. Many towns have memorials dedicated to the fallen. Ever-dwindling numbers of Canadian vets still attend liberation day parades. Even casual Canadian visitors to the Netherlands are sometimes taken aback at the friendliness displayed towards them just for being from Canada.

In Canada, there are fewer concrete reminders. But, each spring, Canadians are reminded of the liberation through a gift that Princess Juliana sent to Ottawa in 1945 — 100,000 tulip bulbs. The tradition continued over the years, with 10,000 bulbs gifted annually. The tulip festival is now a major event that clothes Canada’s capital city in a riot of colour — an enduring reminder of the unrestrained joy that erupted in the Netherlands when Canadian troops liberated the country seventy years ago. 🌷

// See more at CanadasHistory.ca/Netherlands



R.M. Douglas of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles is surrounded by a group of women celebrating the liberation of Deventer, Netherlands, April 10, 1945.



FRONTIERS OF KNOWLEDGE

Enlightened Zeal: The Hudson's Bay Company and Scientific Networks, 1670-1870

by Ted Binnema
University of Toronto Press,
482 pages, \$37.95

Last year I had the privilege of visiting for the first time the remarkable Hudson's Bay Company Gallery at the Manitoba Museum. I was struck by the variety of things on display related to science — globes, specimens, medical artifacts and instruments. We don't often read about HBC contributions to science.

The HBC in fact made significant contributions to several fields of science — meteorology, cartography, botany, astronomy, geology, zoology, and physics. In his new book, *Enlightened Zeal*, Ted Binnema, a professor of history at the University of Northern British Columbia, has reconstructed in compelling depth the history of these activities from 1670 to 1870. Much of the history relates to activities in the Arctic and Subarctic. I left the book with a more complete sense of life in the HBC and its impact on Canadian history — and, as a historian of science, I learned much from the complex conditions of scientific practice within the HBC.

Binnema chronicles this history through three main periods. In the first period, from 1670 to 1768, the HBC had a sporadic and secretive tradition of support for science. HBC leadership did not see the benefit of being open about abundant geographic knowledge — they thought their maps could only help the competition.

In the second period, from 1769 to 1821, following the highly successful

international efforts related to the transit of Venus astronomical observations, HBC leaders started to see the benefits of helping — and being seen to help — science. Scientific personalities began to seep into and build networks within the HBC, and these people started sharing their knowledge outside the company. For example, a famous 1795 map by Aaron Arrowsmith benefitted directly from trained surveyors working for HBC.

In the third period, from 1821 to 1870, following the merger of the HBC and its fierce competitor, the North West Company, the HBC enjoyed its golden era. A free-trade liberal climate at home in Britain prompted the HBC to burnish its image by providing “disinterested” philanthropic support for science. Binnema quotes several scientists who explicitly thank and pay homage to the HBC for its benevolent contributions to science, with no apparent concern for company gain. However, the company did gain much in public image.

The HBC was a chartered company that enjoyed a substantial monopoly. How does science develop within this context? Binnema studied in detail the nature of the networks within the HBC scientific enterprise; he followed a wide range of interactions between HBC governors and metropolitan scientists in London, explorers, travelling scientists,

and non-technical employees in remote HBC territories.

Binnema found the secret ingredient in the making and sustaining of these networks to be the “zeal” of the employees to contribute to science, in spite of their not having a technical background or benefiting in material ways. Gifted HBC explorers and scientific travellers, such as John Rae and David Douglas, had a knack for inspiring this enthusiasm in the people they worked with and encountered. Binnema shows how these inspired activities and networks thrived amidst many competing agendas and forces.

We often think of exploration and science as interchangeable, but within the HBC they were sometimes in direct conflict. Explorers needed to push through at all costs on behalf of the company, while scientists needed time, materials, and freedom to gather a comprehensive body of data and specimens. One sees this tension prominently in the many pages devoted to the quest to explore the Northwest Passage. The surgeon-physician becomes a crucial player in this network, serving the needs of company employees while gathering natural history specimens for an audience back home.

In *Enlightened Zeal*, Binnema also explains how science works in expeditionary mode and in extreme situations. We read about the incredible planning, the movement of specimens, instruments, and books, and the multiple dependencies on various communities such as indigenous peoples. Social intelligence in these circumstances is a tool as powerful as a precision scientific instrument.

Magnetism emerges as a key field of study. In the nineteenth century, British scientists were part of what was called the “magnetic crusade” to measure magnetic data all around the world; they were interested in basic scientific questions about the earth and magnetism, but also in problems related to navigation.

Jean Henry Lefroy, who founded the magnetic observatory in Toronto in 1842, travelled throughout HBC territories with much assistance. He owed his success in part to his ability to inspire a zeal for his project, and he later arranged for the artist Paul Kane to travel HBC lands. Binnema writes

about the huge impact these two travellers had on Canadian science and, later, on the western expansionist movements.

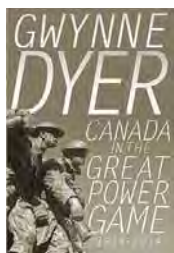
From space weather to mineral exploration, we are surrounded today by the technical legacy of these early contributions. The National Geomagnetic Observatory in Ottawa has a copy of Paul Kane's painting of Lefroy in its lobby, the same painting that appears on the cover of *Enlightened Zeal*. Lefroy is often viewed as an emissary of British science, but Binnema's book shows the complicated nature of the networks within which he operated and the crucial role the Hudson's Bay Company played in supporting them.

Reviewed by **David Pantalony**, curator of physical sciences and medicine at the Canada Science and Technology Museum in Ottawa.

FIREPROOF PAWN

Canada in the Great Power Game, 1914-2014

by Gwynne Dyer
Random House Canada,
433 pages, \$34.95



The one hundredth anniversary of the Great War has been the occasion for a plethora of academic and popular books on the war, as well as numerous remembrance ceremonies. Interestingly, less attention has been paid to two other important anniversaries — the seventy-fifth anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the end of the Cold War. In some ways, Gwynne Dyer's *Canada in the Great Power Game* provides an interesting corrective in examining Canada's foreign and defence policy over the past century. He places Canada within a much larger historical narrative in which this country has been unnecessarily dragged into wars and conflicts by the machinations of the great powers.

Well-written and highly readable, the book is, however, uneven in its historical treatment. Beginning with a discussion

of Canada's reluctant engagement in the Boer War, Dyer devotes two thirds of the text to an examination of Canada, the great powers, and international politics from the beginnings of the Great War to the end of the Second World War. The remainder of his book is dominated by the Cold War, with only a very brief examination of the post-Cold War era. Not only does this era appear almost as an afterthought, the discussion is restricted to the reasons surrounding the decision by former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien not to send Canadians to fight in Iraq.

There is also a puzzling unevenness in Dyer's central argument of Canada being ostensibly a victim of imperial great-power politics. Covering well-known historical ground, he addresses the double-edged sword of domestic politics driving Canadian policy decisions during the world wars: English-Canadian pressures to go to war and French-Canadian pressures to stand aside. Managing these contradictory domestic pressures, especially the issue of conscription, is central to Dyer's narrative. This argument is picked up briefly in his discussion of the Korean War, and again in the significance he attaches to domestic politics in Chrétien's Iraq decision.

Unfortunately, domestic politics largely disappears from Dyer's Cold War narrative. Here, he shifts to the United States as the great power responsible for the Cold War, a function of the dominance of the military-industrial complex. In Dyer's discussion of the early years of North American air defence co-operation, a supposed imperial American conspiracy is said to be abetted by the Royal Canadian Air Force. Moreover, he posits that the United States was the driving force behind the creation of NATO — contrary to the standard interpretation, which emphasizes the roles of Great Britain and Canada.

Dyer's historical narrative is interspersed with short "excursions," which some readers may find enlightening and others distracting. For example, he engages in a what-if excursion concerning the British and French guarantee in 1939 to defend Poland. Strangely, he suggests that had no guarantee been made the end result would have been the same, at less cost to the West — war involving the

Soviet Union, and the defeat of Nazi Germany. Later, he discusses anthropological evidence regarding the violent nature of pre-modern societies.

In the end, Dyer appears to be a modern-day isolationist, echoing Senator Raoul Dandurand's famous statement to the League of Nations regarding Canada as a fireproof house, and offering hope for a future United Nations shorn of great-power control. Underpinning this isolationism, for example, he posits that in the world of great-power politics it doesn't matter what Canada does or doesn't do. He says Pierre Trudeau's defence cuts, for example, had no impact whatsoever. Unfortunately, to the Europeans and West Germany, they did matter, as Trudeau would find out.

Perhaps Canada should not be interested in great-power politics. Unfortunately, though, great-power politics are interested in Canada.

Reviewed by **James Fergusson**, the director of the Centre for Defence and Security Studies at the University of Manitoba.

CULTURAL ADAPTATION

Return to the Land of the Head Hunters: Edward S. Curtis, the Kwakwaka'wakw, and the Making of Modern Cinema

Edited by Brad Evans
and Aaron Glass
University of Washington Press,
420 pages, \$50



It was billed as an "Indian epic drama" when it opened in a few theatres in December 1914, but the Edward S. Curtis movie *In the Land of the Head Hunters* was both more and less than that. Curtis was considered one of the leading experts on the indigenous population of western North America, and his photographs and historical studies had helped to bring the stories of the Aboriginal peoples to the masses.

One poster for his movie said it had been “enacted by primitive Indians,” a reference to the Kwakwaka’wakw actors from northern Vancouver Island. (Curtis usually referred to them as the Qagyu’l people, but, for the record, they were known as Kwakiutl at the time.) The movie was supposed to take viewers back to a time before the First Nations on the Pacific coast had been in contact with Europeans. It is, however, far from a documentary, given that it includes fabrications of local culture and promotes stereotypes of Aborigines from elsewhere.

In the Land of the Head Hunters was a first, in several ways. It was the first feature-length movie shot in Western Canada. It was the first movie to be made with the willing participation of a local First Nations community, and it was also considered to be the first narrative documentary.

The movie was a logical progression for Curtis, who at the time of its release was halfway through producing a twenty-volume series of books, *The North American Indian*, which served as a compilation of his photographs. The books were popular, but the movie was not a hit. After opening in Seattle and New York, it was shown here and there across North America over the next year, in places such as Washington, D.C., Oakland, California, and Fairbanks, Alaska.

Return to the Land of the Head Hunters, published in recognition of the centenary of the movie’s release, is a collection of essays on the original movie, its impact, and the work that has been done to restore it. The book was edited by Brad Evans, an associate professor of English at Rutgers University in New Jersey, and Aaron Glass, an assistant professor of anthropology at the Bard Graduate Center in New York City.

The essays are by anthropologists, Native American authorities, artists, musicians, literary scholars, and film historians. The book includes Kwakwaka’wakw perspectives on the film, as well as information about how it was made and distributed. It explores the interpretation of First Nations culture through the years and takes readers well away from Vancouver Island.

Curtis wanted to show First Nations the way they used to be, not the way they

were when he turned his cameras on them. To that end, he modified reality as he saw fit. That is especially the case with *In the Land of the Head Hunters*, which by all accounts is a melodrama based on classic literature, mixed with contemporary white perceptions of Indians.

This book tells the story of one of Vancouver Island’s most important contributions to filmmaking and finally gives proper credit to the role of the Kwakwaka’wakw in making it. Beyond that, it deals with the history of the Kwakwaka’wakw as well as the history of cinema and the use of sound in cinema.

Reviewed by **Dave Obee**, the editor-in-chief of the *Victoria Times Colonist* and author of several books on genealogical research.

HEEDING THE CALL

The Necessary War Volume One: Canadians Fighting the Second World War, 1939-1943

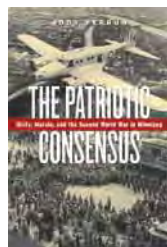
by Tim Cook

Allen Lane, 520 pages, \$39.95

The Patriotic Consensus: Unity, Morale, and the Second World War in Winnipeg

by Jody Perrun

University of Manitoba Press, 292 pages, \$27.95



Seventy-five years after it broke out, the Second World War still looms large in memory and in the history of the twentieth century — as it should. The concerted effort to defeat Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany truly was “a war of good against evil” and “the necessary war,” as Tim Cook aptly calls

it in his latest military history. From 1939 to 1945, a staggering sixty million people were killed, including forty-four thousand Canadians. Another fifty-five thousand Canadians were wounded. The war “brought an endless grief to families and communities across Canada,” Cook writes.

As both Cook and Jody Perrun — the latter in her book about the impact of the war on Winnipeg — show so well, Canadians, with painful memories of the First World War still fresh, did not relish another conflict with the same patriotic fervour they had felt in 1914. But they could not ignore a call to duty, or the Nazi threat to a “radical shift in the existing world order,” as Perrun puts it.

Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, who managed to skilfully guide the country through the Second World War, feared that another war would tear the country apart, as had happened over conscription in 1917, and tax Canada’s finances, which were rattled by a decade of economic depression. Still, he and the members of his government, like a majority of the country’s nearly twelve million citizens, were committed to standing by Britain.

Under King’s leadership, Canada had acquired greater autonomy within the British Empire during the previous two decades. Nonetheless, when the mother country called for help in 1939, Canadians like J.K. Chapman, a twenty-year-old New Brunswicker who enlisted in November 1940, heeded the call. He and his friends, Chapman wrote, were “proud of being Canadians, [but] we were prouder still to belong to something greater: The British Empire upon which the sun never set.”

Chapman’s story, along with hundreds more like it — the intimate accounts of the men and women who fought and died battling the malevolent Nazi menace — are at the heart of Cook’s ambitious first volume of a planned two-volume history of Canada and the Second World War. In this initial instalment, his narrative starts with Canada’s entry into the war in September 1939 and ends in December 1943 during the Italian campaign with the hard-fought Battle of Ortona, which cost the lives of 1,372 Canadians.

Since he published *At the Sharp End* and *Shock Troops* in 2007 and 2008, his award-winning two-part history of Canada and the First World War, Cook, a historian at the Canadian War Museum, has become the country's pre-eminent chronicler of the country's military past. He only enhances his reputation in this new work, which employs the same successful formula as his earlier books: a brilliant mixture of solid research, academic perspective, personal stories, and excellent writing.

Cook, who uses a vast array of archival sources, is at his best when he narrates the story of the war — the heroism and comradeship as well as the poor military strategic planning, the tragedies, and the atrocities — through the personal experiences of Canadians who served in Europe, Asia, and around the globe. He takes his readers into Japanese prison camps following the surrender of Hong Kong in late 1941, documenting the brutality endured by Canadian POWs; to life aboard a crowded corvette in the bitterly cold North Atlantic; through a harrowing bombing mission over Germany as experienced by a member of the Royal Canadian Air Force; and to the tragic debacle of the failed raid on Dieppe, France, in August 1942, during which more than 836 Canadians were killed — some executed by the Germans on the beach — and nearly two thousand were captured.

Where Cook takes a macro view of the war by focusing mainly on Canadians serving on the front lines, Winnipeg-based history professor Jody Perrun offers a micro perspective of the war years in that city. Like most other Canadians, Winnipeggers embraced the war and were encouraged to do so by government appeals and propaganda, though the consensus was not as universal as general histories usually have it. There was dissent, for example, from conscientious objectors and the radical left, whose proponents had a visible presence among the city's ethnically diverse population. And, though Canada was in theory fighting the evils of Nazism, prejudice and discrimination did not suddenly vanish; when black, Asian, and some Aboriginal Canadians tried to enlist in the early years of the war in Winnipeg, they were turned away.

Perrun's book, a reworking of her doctoral dissertation, is by design more academic in approach, style, and writing than Cook's and will likely appeal to a narrower audience. Her research is impeccable, and she covers a number of issues in dissecting the city's experience during the war. Mainly, she examines how local community organizations played a key role in promoting unity, raising money — few Victory Loan events matched the spectacle of "If Day" in February 1942, a simulated Nazi invasion of Manitoba — and boosting Winnipeg's overall morale for the war effort. While her treatment of the city's major ethnic groups is uneven, overall, her book, like Tim Cook's, is an original and important scholarly contribution to the literature on Canada's history during the Second World War.

Reviewed by **Allan Levine**, a Winnipeg historian and author. His most recent book is *Toronto: Biography of a City*.

ALL THAT GLITTERS

A Rock Fell on the Moon: Dad and the Great Yukon Silver Ore Heist

by Alicia Priest

Harbour Publishing, 261 pages, \$32.95



This is not your usual true-crime story. It's an elegant, emotional, sometimes humorous, sometimes sad story of a man's fall from grace, written from the point of view of a daughter who once adored him. And it's a story of how his actions shattered a family who once placed their trust in him.

Gerry Priest perpetrated, and almost got away with, the audacious theft of a large amount of silver ore from a Yukon mine in the early 1960s. Priest was the chief assayer for United Keno Hill Mine (UKHM) at Elsa, about seven hundred kilometres north of Whitehorse. The mine was then the second-largest producer of silver in Canada. Priest saw an opportunity to take some high-grade chunks of silver ore that had been left lying on the

mine floor and claim them for his own. Working with at least one accomplice in the dark hours, he removed, bag by bag, seventy tonnes of ore and sent the material to a smelter in the United States. To cover up the theft, he staked his own claim at a nearby site known as the Moon and claimed the ore came from there.

Priest's family believed him — for a time. To his young daughters, Alicia and Vona, he was larger than life, a hero. He dangled before them the prospect of a better life that included horses and trips to Disneyland. To his wife, Helen, a stunningly beautiful and resourceful woman who had suffered greatly as a refugee in Second World War Europe, he promised comfort and security.

Things began to unravel after UKHM became suspicious of truckloads of ore leaving the area. Priest and his accomplice were eventually charged and ordered to stand trial after the longest preliminary hearing in Yukon history. It wasn't easy for the prosecution to establish where the ore had come from. The first trial ended with a hung jury. The second trial ended with a conviction, although, as the author points out, Priest would not likely have been found guilty today, since he was charged under a now-overturned section of the Criminal Code that placed the burden of proving innocence on the accused.

The facts of the case — how Priest carried out the theft and covered his tracks, how the company spared no expense to disprove his case, how RCMP officers never relaxed their vigilance, how people living in the company town hated UKHM and applauded anyone who stuck it to the company — make a good story in themselves.

But the real story is intensely personal. Alicia Priest, a journalist, pens a heart-breaking yet objective account of growing up in the care of her complicated father: "Whether or not he knows, is prepared or cares a whit, a father holds his daughters' hearts in his hands. Dad, like many men, had steady, strong and tender hands when we were young, but as Vona stampeded and I tiptoed to womanhood, his hands trembled, became rough and, at times — there is no other word for it — cruel."

Under the pressure of “Dad’s” increasingly dark and erratic behaviour before, during, and after serving his sentence, the marriage broke up and the family scattered. But, as the writer makes clear from the beginning of the book, the true heroes of this story are her mother, Helen Friesen, and grandmother, Maria. Theirs is a tale of loss and survival as German-speaking Mennonites forced to flee Russia and then Nazi Germany. In Vancouver, Helen falls for the seemingly strong and charming Gerry Priest. After they marry, her mother — “Omi” to her grandchildren — joins the family in the Yukon. “Omi was our rock,” declares the writer.

Included in the book are professional-quality photographs of their early life — taken by Gerry Priest, a talented amateur photographer. They are a great accompaniment to the story.

This beautifully written book is Alicia Priest’s first. Sadly, it is also her last. Priest began the book in 2011 after being diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) — an incurable neurodegenerative

disease that leads to gradual paralysis and death. With the end of her life approaching, she decided it was time to tell her family’s remarkable story. Priest died January 13, 2015.

Reviewed by **Nelle Oosterom**, senior editor of *Canada’s History* magazine

REVEALING PILGRIMAGE

Into the Blizzard: Walking the Fields of the Newfoundland Dead

by Michael Winter

Doubleday Canada, 352 pages, \$32



The many books that follow in the footsteps of the centenary of the First World War tend to track history itself as overwhelming and momentous. The huge backwash of war demands respect, but it also includes a bewildering plethora of dates and numbers, battles and ammunition.

In his first non-fiction book, novelist Michael Winter sets himself the task of making a different history, by personalizing that monumental narrative. He understands that over-attentiveness to the past turns us into spectators, and, in writing the story of the Newfoundlanders and their place in the First World War, he makes the story of their regiment his own. Ultimately, then, his new book *Into the Blizzard* becomes a powerful meditation on how we read and understand history.

The book records Winter’s expedition as he follows “the Trail of the Caribou,” the path taken by the Blue Puttees (the Newfoundland Regiment), from Newfoundland to the United Kingdom, where they trained and where those who survived conflict were eventually repatriated; to Gallipoli, where they were the only North American troops to fight; and then to the Western Front, where so many were killed and are buried. The only regiment to be composed purely of volunteers for the entirety of the war, the Newfoundlanders epitomized courage and unflinching steadiness. They sym-

bolize those elements that Winter would say make us “loyal to war,” and yet they reflect a greater loss, a loss shared by all those colonies that fought on behalf of a parent country.

Instead of regarding the past voyeuristically, Winter makes of his pilgrimage an intimate journey, one that reveals as much about him as it does about the Newfoundland Regiment he seeks to understand. It is that willingness to participate in and to take responsibility for the history he tracks that makes his book so moving, so powerfully inclusionary. By recording his own ridiculous distance and ignorance, Winter makes sense of what that war means and what it did, its long legacy of violence and loss.

Alongside the journey he undertakes, his approach is to unfold individual stories that are interspersed with the larger story of the Newfoundland Regiment and what its members encountered. Winter’s narrative, then, conveys the intense flavour of its time but offers as well the personal and the political, the daily and the quotidian, as measurements of lives lived or cut short.

Most of all, Winter seeks to escape the ponderous reach of research, the terrible banalities like the one so commonly used to describe tragic fighting at Beaumont-Hamel, France: “Of the 778 men who went into battle that morning, only 68 answered the roll call the next day.” He is determined to thwart empty and awful phrases like, “Newfoundlanders taught the world how to die.” And he does, with a tender detail that offers a model for how to apprehend wars old and new.

As Winter writes, “The history of war writing is a history that consents with the dimensions and depth of war as a method to communicate.” This book is then both a history of the Newfoundland Regiment and a critique of war writing, of the ways clichés and truisms have made war palatable.

He sets out his challenge clearly, asking “how war and the past creep into everyday life. How does the past ambush us? How can we be accurate about what happened, how can we be true to it? And can we ever be declared over? And can we ever evolve from the notion of war, of nations, of us versus them?” It is a challenge Winter meets, even exceeds, with unflinching

Journey to the Heart of the
FIRST PEOPLES COLLECTIONS



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honesty and beautiful observation.

Into the Blizzard is a masterpiece of unapologetic heart. From the first page, the reader recognizes the hands of a grand writer — from the “fatigued glow that dawn presents” early in the morning to the observation that silliness can be an antidote to trench warfare.

The details Winter highlights, ranging from what happens to deserters to what happens to heroes, provide a wonderful tapestry, a history of Newfoundland as well as of Newfoundlanders in that long-ago war. From the melancholy beauty of the cemeteries to the absurdity of combat training, Winter negotiates this powerfully moving account, balancing his own sense of mortality with a keen sympathy for the distinctive Newfoundland story.

Into the Blizzard encounters the blizzard of snow, the blizzard of gunfire, the blizzard of fear and paper and genealogy and injury, the terror and the power of these men as individuals. His metaphor — that “they faced the blizzard of machine-gun fire with their chins tucked into an advanced shoulder, just like they did back home in a snowstorm” — is unforgettable, as is this beautiful book, this moving, strangely resistant meditation on memory and memorialization.

Reviewed by **Aritha van Herk**, whose most recent works, *In This Place* and *Prairie Gothic* (with George Webber), explore the idea of place-writing. She is a professor of English at the University of Calgary.

MORE BOOKS

The Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore: An Illustrated History of Railway Stations in Canada

by Ron Brown

Dundurn Press, 202 pages, \$29.99



The Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore both celebrates and mourns railways in Canada. Author Ron Brown, a geographer and writer

in Toronto, toasts rail stops across the country that have been saved or remain in use, such as North Toronto, a CPR sta-

tion on Yonge Street.

The book contains mostly black-and-white photographs of railway stations. Some of them were grandiose, built at a time when railways were big contributors to the country's economy and stations were social centres. Brown hopes his book “will appeal to anyone who has links with our rail era, or who simply appreciates the value of Canada's built heritage.”

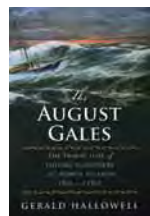
In the book's final chapter, he commemorates lost railway stations, including those that disappeared as a result of the Canadian Pacific Railway's demolition of almost every station between Toronto and the Quebec border.

Brown contends that railway stations have architectural merit, play vital roles in communities, and should be either preserved or recycled. “History is even better served when the station remains beside the tracks and continues to play a ‘station role,’” he writes. — *Danelle Cloutier*

The August Gales: The Tragic Loss of Fishing Schooners in the North Atlantic, 1926 and 1927

by Gerald Hallowell

Nimbus Publishing, 256 pages, \$21.95



The ships are safer now, equipped with satellite radio and outfitted with high-tech survival suits. But each time a vessel heads out of port for its fishing grounds there's a silent prayer whispered by the crew's family and friends onshore: Be safe. Make it home.

Sadly, Atlantic Canada is no stranger to seafaring tragedy. Over the centuries, thousands of fishermen never made it home, instead becoming victims of raging storms and rough seas.

In *The August Gales*, historian Gerald Hallowell recounts the tales of two terrible storms that ravaged fishing communities in Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and New England in 1926 and 1927. Hallowell worked for years as an editor at University of Toronto Press, and it's clear he has a gift for storytelling. He transforms his rigorous research into compelling prose that keeps the pages turning.

An Ontario native, Hallowell cur-

rently lives in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, a town that is steeped in fishing history. Home of the *Bluenose* and *Bluenose II*, this seaside village on the province's South Shore figures prominently in the book; at least six ships from that port sank in the August gales of 1926 and 1927.

The August Gales also features a series of black-and-white photos that help to bring the stories of these tragic events to life. — *Mark Collin Reid*

Of Courage and Determination: The First Special Service Force, “The Devil's Brigade,” 1942-44

by Colonel Bernd Horn

and Michel Wyczynski

Dundurn Press, 408 pages, \$35



During the Second World War, Canadian and American units often fought side-by-side against the Axis powers. But one special unit brought soldiers from both countries under a single command. *Of Courage and Determination*, by Colonel Bernd Horn and Michel Wyczynski, tells the story of the exceptional “Devil's Brigade,” subject of a 1968 Hollywood movie.

Formed in 1942 with the eventual aim of attacking remote targets in Norway, the First Special Service Force would see extensive fighting in Italy, at Monte La Difensa and at Anzio, and in southern France as part of Operation Dragoon. While an operational success, the unit was plagued by bureaucratic issues and disbanded suddenly at the end of 1944.

“The force, despite administrative difficulties, was, from the perspective of most of the soldiers, the embodiment of warrior spirit, kindred spirit, a demonstration of how close Americans and Canadians truly are,” the authors write.

Horn and Wyczynski pay tribute to the Canadian and American soldiers who served in the Devil's Brigade through their engaging and passionate look at Second World War combat. — *Joel Ralph*

For more Canadian history reviews, visit
CanadasHistory.ca/Books



Creating a buzz

Can honeybees help historians understand environmental change?

Honeybees don't have history, do they? Hatched by the millions, they labour all their lives as drones for the hive, and then they die.

But recently Jennifer Bonnell found honeybees everywhere in the history she was writing. Bonnell was doing environmental history, examining the interrelations between human history and the changing state of Toronto's Don River.

The Don, she told me recently, has long been an "edge" space. It lies close to a growing city, but the deep valley it has carved makes it a little more resistant to development than the surrounding plain has been.

Early in the city's history, the Don Valley

became a refuge for squatters, even gangs. Lots of other development came along, too. The Don became so polluted that the river caught fire on a number of occasions. Eventually a commuter highway cut through the valley.

But Bonnell found honeybees throughout her sources. "I kept coming across these bits of evidence of 'rural' land uses in the heart of the city," she says. Bees and beekeepers became a window onto the environmental history she was tracing.

"The valley was bee pasture, an urban green space close to the city, and that was vital to marginal producers like honey sellers."

Bees — and their keepers — depend on plants and flowers on land they do not own

or control. The bees become the canaries in the coal mines of changing environments. Early Don Valley beekeepers were among the first to notice the unintended impact of agricultural progress and intensified settlement. "As clover was replaced by crops, as roadsides were moved and sprayed, all those spaces were lost, and so was bee forage space," Bonnell says.

Even in the 1890s, the beekeepers knew something was killing their bees. Decades ahead of the modern environmental movement, beekeepers were among the first to raise the alarm about the first uses of pesticides. The threats grew worse in the twentieth century: industrial development, water pollution, and eventually the freeway built through the valley.

Bonnell's book, *Reclaiming the Don: An Environmental History*, was published in 2014. Now she has moved on to a larger history of beekeeping, looking at "modernizing landscapes — patterns of agriculture in places that are changing." It turns out that industrial agriculture can be as hostile to bees as intense urban development.

Environmental history has become a hot field of study by looking afresh at things we used to consider timeless.

Climate change is making Canadians aware of how climate and the environment will change over time.

Bonnell's bee research has been shadowed by the epidemic named Colony Collapse Disorder. Since it emerged in 2007, CCD has been killing about a third of all the honeybees in North America every winter. But is it new?

"Really," says Bonnell, "it is the latest in a long series of devastations. It is not just a specific biological or medical problem."

That is environmental history, too. Studying environmental change over time encourages historians to engage with the public role of history.

Bonnell has long been "a historian who turns to the public use of history," she says. "Historians can discover and document larger changes — the broad effect of human changes to the environment.

The humanities can connect us to these realities. Environmental history is one way. Historians have the information."

So, in their own way, do the bees. 

Christopher Moore comments in every issue and blogs at ChristopherMoore.ca.



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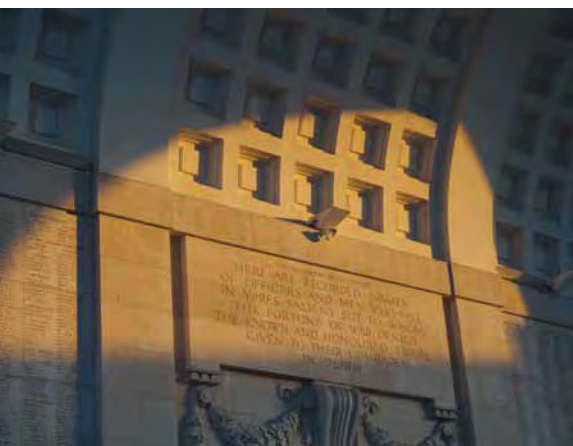
CANADA'S
HISTORY



Fields of remembrance

The Great War is never far away in a region where thousands of Canadians sacrificed and are buried.

Photo essay by Phil Koch



A HUNDRED YEARS AGO, Canadian soldiers endured some of the First World War's most horrifying combat in the fields of Flanders, the northern part of Belgium. The Ypres salient, a line of the front that curved around the city of Ypres, near the French border, was the scene of particularly terrifying and bloody battles. Known locally as Ieper, Ypres was shelled to a point where barely a tree or a building was left untouched (our tour guide held a black-and-white photo, left, showing the destruction). But in the decades after the war, a painstaking effort was made to rebuild the historic city in traditional architectural styles.

Its magnificent medieval Cloth Hall, above, has been carefully reconstructed and today houses the In Flanders Fields Museum — a great starting point for comprehending the scale of the conflict and its consequences for the region and for the thousands who came to defend it. If you dare, climb the bell tower for a magnificent if slightly precarious-feeling view of Ypres, including the adjacent St. Martin's Cathedral and nearby Menin Gate. Each evening since the late 1920s (except for a period during the Second World War) people have gathered in and around the immense gate for the playing of the last post; on some days, an extended ceremony includes the laying of wreaths. The Menin Gate Memorial, bottom left, names more than fifty-four thousand of the ninety thousand Commonwealth soldiers who died in this tiny region without proper burial during the Great War.

IN APRIL 1915, the fields near Ypres saw the first large-scale use of poison gas in modern combat. German forces unleashed the deadly and terrifying weapon, first against French and Algerian troops, then against Canadians, who had stepped up to hold the line. That May, at the Essex Farm medical station, just outside of Ypres and not far from the front, Canadian medical officer John McCrae wrote his poem “In Flanders Fields,” which eventually made the poppy a symbol for commemorating war dead and of the region around Ypres. A monument installed between the preserved bunker and adjacent cemetery commemorates McCrae’s poem.

A few kilometres east, near Langemark, the impressive ten-metre-high “brooding soldier” monument honours the two thousand Canadians who died in that spring’s Second Battle of Ypres, which included the gas attacks. A little further from the front, Talbot House, in Poperinghe, was a rarity — an “Every Man’s Club” where soldiers of all ranks and nationalities could rest for a few days before returning to combat. On our visit, a cat frolicked on the second-level rooftop — accessible through a window — that came to be known as the “Canadian Lounge” for the soldiers who created it as a place for games and refreshments.



MANY THOUSANDS OF COMBATANTS rest in the more than one hundred Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemeteries within a short distance from Ypres. At Lijssenthoek, above — once the site of a war hospital and now the second-largest Commonwealth cemetery in Belgium — a new visitor centre tells the history of the site and its more than ten thousand headstones. Every day, a video panel

provides details about one soldier who passed away on that same date and is buried at Lijssenthoek; on the day we were there, Arthur Neville Peerless, an English-born Winnipegger, was showcased. Only Tyne Cot, where nearly twelve thousand were buried in the same muddy soil in which they fought at the tragic 1917 battle of Passchendaele, contains more First World War Commonwealth graves.



THE MEMORIAL MUSEUM Passchendaele 1917, at Zonnebeke, brings visitors closer to the experience of First World War soldiers and provides insight into a battle that saw countless German and Allied soldiers, including more than four thousand Canadians, killed in one horrific summer for little gain. On our way to the museum, our guide had us stop to see a couple of the thousands of First World War shells that are recovered each year from Flanders' fields and left by the roadside for special crews to remove. With people killed or injured by leftover shells every few years, the war continues to exact its toll.

Inside the museum, one gets a visceral sense of the war's conditions. Exhibits include displays of gas masks, a chance to smell the putrid fumes created by different types of poison gas (one whiff was enough for me), and an assortment of war artifacts, uniforms, and equipment — such as the amazing variety of colourful shells that were used to obliterate opposing forces and the surrounding landscape. Maze-like tunnels and trenches allow visitors to see how soldiers lived during combat.



FLANDERS' CITIES, TOWNS, AND COUNTRYSIDE are dotted with memorials, none more impressive than the eighty-four-metre-high Yser Tower museum at Diksmuide. Like many other sites, it and the adjacent Gate of Peace, right, emphasize the wish for lasting peace in a land scarred by conflict. Meanwhile, the Coming World Remember Me project is counting on 600,000 people to participate by making clay objects that in 2018 will be combined to form a large public art installation representing the number of people who lost their lives in Belgium during the war.



MUSEUMS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY are hosting special exhibits that examine aspects of the war in greater detail. For instance, the Museum Dr. Guislain, in Ghent — housed in Belgium's oldest psychiatric hospital — hosted an exhibit, entitled War and Trauma, that displayed challenging and sometimes provocative art related to the suffering experienced during the First World War and more recent conflicts. In Leuven, a medieval university town where the Germans burned the massive library and its treasure of books, a few charred volumes are displayed in the rebuilt building, and the Museum Leuven held a large exhibition entitled Ravaged: Art and Culture in Times of Conflict.



A LONG-RUNNING EXHIBIT at the military history museum in Belgian capital Brussels looks at the political structures in place before 1914, how they led to conflict between nations whose royal families were closely related by birth and marriage, the deprivation of Belgians during the war, and the conflict's social and political aftermath. As our ex-military Belgian museum guide explained, the country's suffering stemmed from the German emperor's determination to send troops through Belgium to France in spite of the insistence by his nephew, Belgian King Albert I, that the country's neutrality be respected.

Belgium is a country that won't forget either the consequences of war or the sacrifices of the many combatants — including thousands of Canadians — who came to defend the land and its people. Contact Visit Flanders for details regarding exhibits and events that commemorate the war's centenary, or for information about the region's many other cultural attractions. 🐾

Phil Koch is the associate editor of *Canada's History* magazine.

➤ See more photos at CanadasHistory.ca/FlandersRemembers



Crestwood Preparatory College students Amanda Lee and Max Ahn interviewed Korean War veteran Henry Chu (centre) as part of an oral history project.

Telling tales

Let's encourage all Canadians to share their stories.

by Janet Walker

"Not a day passes over this earth but men and women of no note do great deeds, speak great words and suffer noble sorrows."

I first learned of this quote from a favourite uncle. It comes from English author Charles Reade, who used the inspiring line to open his book *The Cloister and the Hearth*, a tale about a young scribe whose detailed description of people and events stands as a transcript of fifteenth-century life. I've always loved the words because they speak to the importance of the champions among us who don't always find their way into the history books.

That notion of documenting the history of ordinary people was underscored when I returned to the University of Winnipeg in 2010 to study oral history. Through coursework and with practice, it became startlingly evident that when we interviewed our subjects they frequently answered our questions in the form of stories. The ancient art of storytelling helps to link memory with history through narrative inquiry and analytical reflection — an unhurried process that's supported by today's digital audio recorders, which eliminate the necessity for chronological recounting.

Oral history can be an important tool in defining the collective issues of women, or for understanding the rich cultural heritage of indigenous peoples. It can record

insights from businesspeople and cultural leaders or reveal the experiences of pioneers, soldiers, and refugees.

One of the concepts at the core of the study of oral history is known as "shared authority." It reinforces a collaborative process where the interviewer and the narrator contribute not only to understand how things are but also to explore how things got to be the way they are. The dialogue begins with a question or a photograph to help the narrator begin the act of remembering. It continues because there is someone committed to listening — and understanding.

So why don't more people tell their stories?

Perhaps it is because no one asks. It seems to me that people don't share stories because we don't make the time for this. Life gets



From left: Canada's History Board Chair Richard Pound, Governor General David Johnston, Pierre Berton Award winner Mark Zuehlke, and Canada's History President and CEO Janet Walker.

busy. What if our approach to history included an effort to listen more to the tales of our elders? How might younger Canadians undertake the research and preparation that could help older citizens remember or revisit the details of place and time?

Thankfully, there are many talented and dedicated teachers working to introduce these skills to students across the country — teachers such as Scott Masters, a 2012 winner of the Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching. His students at Crestwood Preparatory College in Toronto collected the oral histories of Second World War veterans and Holocaust survivors and published them online. So far, the students have collected more than two hundred stories and have broadened their outreach to include family members, recent refugees and immigrants, and community leaders.

When the Governor General's teaching awards were launched in 1996, we had no idea that the program would grow exponentially each year to become an annual national celebration of excellence that spans all history communities, from teachers and academics to writers, broadcasters, film and television producers, museum and archive professionals, and community volunteers. Today, we have honoured over two hundred people at the Governor General's History Awards.

Each is an exemplar of excellence in storytelling, encouraging us to explore the past intelligently and critically and with great passion for our shared stories.

Canada's History magazine has been showcasing great storytelling for nearly ninety-five years. From the historians who write our articles, to the teachers and academics we celebrate, to the museums and archives that offer programming to the public, we strive to support the history makers who breathe life into the past.

Our recent book, *Canada's Great War Album*, is a great example of what can be achieved when we all work together. By sharing your stories, photographs and memories with us, we together ensure that these valuable and essential personal histories are not lost.

History matters. *Your* history matters. By giving voice to all Canadians we give testimony to the human experience. 🐾

Janet Walker is President and CEO of Canada's History Society.



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Anglican Archdeacon Thomas Vincent wears clothing made for him by Cree people of the diocese of Moosonee. The photograph was likely taken during his 1886 trip to England for the publication of his Cree translation of John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Despite Vincent's devotion to church principles and years of service to northern communities, his own progress within the church was repeatedly blocked by the racial views of his immediate superiors. Church leaders in England, however, saw his partly Aboriginal ancestry as a benefit, not a hindrance, to his ministry. Vincent's great-great-grandson Thomas Prewer now possesses the hood seen in the photograph. 🐾



Submitted by
Kathleen M. Prewer Lyne.

Do you have a photograph that captures a moment, important or ordinary, in Canada's history? If so, have it copied (please don't send priceless originals) and mail it to Album, c/o Canada's History, Bryce Hall, Main Floor, 515 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R3B 2E9. Or email your photo to album@CanadasHistory.ca. Please provide a brief description of the photo, including its date and location. If possible, identify people in the photograph and provide further information about the event or situation illustrated. To have your posted submission returned, please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

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